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ABSTRACT

From the perspective of the project leader, this book traces the growth and development of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project in Morasha, Israel, during the 8 years of its existence (1982-1990). Chapter 1 describes Morasha, a poor, immigrant neighborhood in Ramat HaSharon, and the author's childhood there. Chapter 2 describes the efforts of the Morasha Council to include the community in the state of Israel's Project Renewal. Chapter 3 reviews Project Renewal activities and efforts to obtain funding from the Bernard van Leer Foundation to begin the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, which sought to develop programs to train paraprofessional women from the community, implementing a home visiting program for mothers and preschoolers, and develop a program of family day care centers for toddlers and preschool children. Chapter 4 describes the work involved in building the project's infrastructure. In chapter 5, basic project approaches, principles, and objectives are described, while in chapter 6, the work involved in translating these theories into community work is detailed. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the project's professional staff, paraprofessional counselors, and paraprofessional caregivers. In chapter 9, efforts to disseminate the project to additional communities in the region are related. Chapter 10 describes the project's structural and organizational characteristics and relationships with other agencies. Chapter 11 explains the project's evaluation component, and chapter 12 provides a summary of the project as a personal and collective journey. Additional information about the project is appended. (AC)



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ED 369 492

# IN FIRST PERSON PLURAL

## growing up with a disadvantaged community

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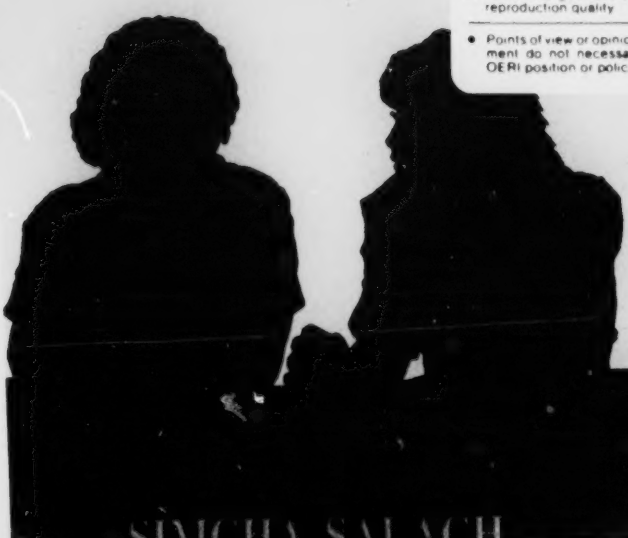

SIMCHA SALACH

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## About the Bernard van Leer Foundation

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is a private institution based in The Netherlands. It takes its name from Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist who died in 1958 and gave his worldwide enterprise for humanitarian purposes. The Foundation's income is derived from this multinational enterprise – Royal Packaging Industries Van Leer – whose core business is the manufacture of packaging products.
In accordance with its statutes, the Foundation gives preference in project support to countries in which Royal Packaging Industries Van Leer is established.

### The Foundation's objectives

The central objective of the Bernard van Leer Foundation is to improve opportunities for young children who live in disadvantaged circumstances. The Foundation uses two main strategies to accomplish this objective:

- it supports the development of innovative field-based approaches in the area of early childhood development; and
- it shares relevant experience with as wide an audience as possible in order to influence policy and practice.

This means that the Foundation supports projects and also advocates for policies and practices that will create improved conditions for children.
The Foundation believes that in order to improve opportunities for young children it is necessary to work with the people who surround them and who can have an influence on their lives. This includes parents, siblings, other family members, communities, organisations that provide services, local and national governments and international institutions.

### Project partners

The Foundation does not run any field-based projects itself. Instead, it offers support to organisations in the different countries. These organisations include government departments, local municipalities, academic institutions and non-governmental organisations. These local partners are responsible for all aspects of a project – development, management, training, implementation, evaluation. They also contribute a proportion of the costs in terms of both money and services.

### Project focus

The projects focus on those children from birth to eight years of age who are least able to benefit from educational and developmental opportunities. These include the children of ethnic and cultural minorities, children living in urban slums, shanty towns and remote rural areas, and children of teenage parents.
A key objective in initiating and implementing projects is that their work will have lasting effects. This does not mean setting up more projects to do the same thing but contributing to reflection, planning, practice and evaluation regionally, nationally and internationally.
Some projects cover a small geographical area, others are province or state-wide while yet others are national in focus.

*(continued on inside back cover)*

*Cover design by Dov Zigelman*

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# In First Person Plural:

## growing up with a disadvantaged community

Simcha Salach

Edited by: Daphna Danon
Translated by: Chaya Naor

Bernard van Leer Foundation.

## About the author

Simcha Salach was born in 1957 in Morasha, a neighbourhood in the town of Ramat HaSharon, Israel. After military service she completed her BA in philosophy and history at Tel Aviv University before studying for an MA. In 1979 she began work in her home community of Morasha, helping to found and then organise a residents' committee. This grew into the Early Childhood and Family Education Project. As project leader throughout its eight year history, she not only was the prime mover behind a robust and successful community development programme centred on early childhood development but, through her work, also grew and developed enormously herself.

She describes this book as the unique story of the life of the project, the core of which was the people, their aspirations and their struggles. It is written as a journey - a personal and collective journey - against the current, and against the paralysing fear of taking chances and making changes.

She now works for the Tel Aviv Foundation, a fundraising organisation dedicated to establishing educational, social and cultural enterprises in the city of Tel Aviv - Yafo.

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Dedicated to my parents:
my father, Naim, and my mother, Aliza,
both of blessed memory

# Contents


Introduction i
Prologue iv
Glossary v

**Part one: Beginnings** 1

Chapter

1 **Morasha:** 1
a dominion of childhood Background.

2 **Turning point** 4
The initiation of social and community activity in Morasha: on the establishment of the Morasha Council; Project Renewal in Morasha; the adoption of Morasha by the Dutch Jewish community.

3 **Awakening** 7
On the initial contact with the Bernard van Leer Foundation; the background to the visit by Bernard van Leer representatives to Morasha; the writing of the first proposal for the establishment of the Early Childhood and Family Development Project in Morasha, with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation; the approval of the proposal and my appointment as the project director.

4 **Baptism of fire** 10
On building the infrastructure for the project's operation; the establishment of the Early Childhood Association and the enlistment of local residents and representatives of institutions as members of the Association and its board; the writing of a workplan for the project's first year of activity in Morasha; the engagement of the first professional on the project staff; the organisation and operation of the project's first programme – the training course for para-professional counsellors and care givers.

**Part two: Taking a theory, making it work**

5 **Inside the community:** 19
the background, the rationale, the vision.
On the basic approaches, the principles and main objectives of the Early Childhood Association – the ideological basis for the project's activity.

6 **For the sake of the community:** 22
the programmes, the activities, the tasks.
On the work of translating the rationale and the basic approaches into work inside the community; a survey of the main programmes designed and implemented during the eight years of the project's activity.

**Part three: Not as a legend**


7 **To sing in a chorus, to be in an orchestra** 43
On the formation of the project's professional staff; the process of empowering the para-professional counsellors – as part of the project's staff, as pathfinders in the process of change in the community, as a microcosm of the entire project.

8 **Education in the cradle** 57
On the process of nurturing the para-professional care givers as a target population in itself, and on their role in the story of the project's development.

9 **Again, and once more, but this time differently** 63
On the dissemination of the Early Childhood and Family Development Project to additional communities in the Sharon region – in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva.

10 **On a tightrope** 71
A close look at the project's structural and organisational aspects and its relationships with its close and distant environment: with the Bernard van Leer Foundation, with community institutions and municipal and governmental bodies in Israel, and with the Dutch Jewish community.


**Part four: The freedom of choice**


11 **Between inputs and outputs – a reckoning** 83
On the evaluation activity which was an integral part of the project's activity, and on the issue of examining and evaluating the project's outputs.

12 **In first person plural** 93
The project as a personal and collective story: on the eight years of directing the project within and from within Morasha; the unique nature of a grassroots project; and on Morasha – before and after.


**Appendices**


1 The Early Childhood and Family Development Project – a Profile 96

2 Milestones in the project's History 97

3 Community Profiles 99

*What if the ship of your life should be tossed in a storm.*
*And you are swept up on an unknown shore.*
*What if a solitary fisherman should meet you and offer his help.*
*What would you ask of him:*
*The fish he has caught in his net?*
*Or the net itself*

*(based on a folk tale)*

Towards the end of this remarkable book, Simcha Salach tells us that the story she reveals is not just that of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project in Morasha, Israel. 'For better or for worse, mostly for better', she writes, 'it is also my own story'. **In First Person Plural** is even more than that: it is also a story about typical intervention programmes for children during the 1980s, of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, and also of myself.

I joined the Bernard van Leer Foundation at about the time that a very young Simcha, fresh from the army, started 'her' project in Morasha. Because it was the first project I encountered in my new job, I developed a strong attachment to the Morasha project, rather like Konrad Lorenz's goslings. So, although from a distance, I have followed closely that particular segment of Simcha's, and therefore the project's, life. These two lives were inseparable: when things were all right with the project, Simcha was delighted; when the project suffered setbacks, Simcha was up for grabs. And many Foundation staff went through similar cycles with her – many times, as the reader will note.

The book gives us a unique insight into the personal world of a project coordinator. As such, it is a rare document. Usually, a project that has run its course is assessed in terms such as: impact on target audience; cost-benefit ratios; organisational shortcomings; attainments or otherwise of objectives; and so on. There is little of all this in her text. Although it is widely accepted that personal factors – especially those of project leaders – are crucial, research has restricted itself to describing specific leadership features that may or may not contribute to the success of grassroots initiatives. Simcha's story takes us much further than that: she allows us to creep under the skin of the project director.

It is the account of a person who, right from the onset, found herself in an atypical situation. And yet so much of what she describes looks familiar, could be readily identified with. Her personal and unique situation is therefore of interest to many others in community development work.

Simcha was a product of her native Morasha, the place of the first intervention programme. In this sense she could be considered as an internal agent of change. But was she really an *internal* agent? After all, we know that it is uncommon for communities to become organised without outside intervention. Could it be that her experiences at university and in the Army, weaned her sufficiently from her neighbourhood, so that this vital ability to stand back, to see the woods for the trees, could develop in her? Did she there acquire the sort of skills that one usually finds in *external* agents? Could she have played a double role? If such a combination of internal/external agents exist, Simcha was certainly one of them. If we accept this mixed role we can perhaps better understand her outstanding success in rallying her community around children and marginalised women, in forging links with national and regional institutions. But the same mixing of roles could also clarify the difficulties she had in getting started in Morasha, in making headway in the nearby towns of Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikwa and in promoting her trailblazing work with para-professionals.

It fascinates me that Simcha, young and inexperienced by all accounts when she began, was able to unfold a vision of community-based intervention for young children and their families that took me and many others many years of study and exposure to develop. Her achievements make the established professionals look redundant, if not foolish. So, what then are the tenets of her knowledge? Were they related to her own and her family's and friends' personal experiences in being looked upon as second rate citizens? Did they come from the influence of an extraordinarily gifted mother from Iraq, or from a father who was always striving to make things better for the disenfranchised? Possibly a combination of all these factors helped her to join the school newspaper, and to form the Morasha Council with a small number of other Morasha residents thus, in her young adulthood, completing a chain linking her childhood with this major responsibility.

Given the discovery that people without proven specialist expertise could do the job well, would the Foundation be prepared to take the same risks should a similar situation arise again? I do not think so. We would now see it as unwise to build a major project on the shoulders of one individual. We would probably first plead for a strengthening of the organisational structure of the project sponsor; argue that capacity building was a vital pre-requisite. Perhaps we would give the new person a 'planning grant' to help sort things out, but not go for a full project. In this, we are supported by wide experience and the literature. Against this background, Simcha's journey is all the more remarkable.

This is a courageous book. It tells us that learning is not always a pleasant experience, that straight lines between plans and outcomes only appear after the fact. It reveals how deeply one's heart and soul get shaken, hurt, injured, or sometimes even lost, when one becomes really involved in human development work. Fortunately, I have seen Simcha emerge from the experience wiser, stronger, and even kinder.

The project experience consisted of two phases, so reminiscent of our thinking a decade ago. There was the traditional pilot or experimental phase in Morasha and then the move outwards, the dissemination stage. We now know that there are no clear phases leading from one to the other; that experimentation, consolidation, and dissemination or replication are often intermingled and have to be addressed simultaneously. I still regret that we convinced Simcha that she should go for dissemination: we should have allowed her to follow the rhythm of her own community. She would then most likely have consolidated and expanded her work in Morasha – so much is still to be done – and would have found other ways to inspire others in Israel working in the same area. But, because we requested her to work elsewhere, she had to assume the role of an external agent. And, like any other such agent, she was not really appreciated: there were enough of those in Israel. The communities really needed their own Simchas: that is people born and raised there, with the same ability to take the broad view. Would the Foundation do things better next time around? I hope so, but am not so sure. It is so tempting for a funding organisation to impose its will, to give priority to its own philosophy. And it is so seldom that we receive such critical feedback on our involvement as Simcha presents us with here.

Simcha lists among her greatest successes the improvement of the skills and the growth in self-confidence of the para-professional workers or counsellors. I agree with her. I met a few of these outstanding women and still remember their excitement, motivation, warmth and knowledge. To me they looked like the stuff good communities are made of. It is so sad to see that in Israel, as anywhere else in the world, there is so little acceptance of people who grow in wisdom and experience other than via the pathway of certification. It is sad to see that professionals often only look after their own interests. I fear we will never win this battle for recognition.

When I finished reading the book, I paused for a moment and wondered 'Would I have liked to be a child in Morasha during the time of the project?' The answer was 'Yes'; I think the experience would have been great. Thanks to Simcha.

Nico van Oudenhoven
July 1993



12

# Prologue

The greater part of this book was written in late 1990, during the last months of the Early Childhood and Family Project which I directed during the eight years of its existence.

Writing this book was a way for me to take a retrospective look, which helped me not only to tell the story of the project's growth and development, but also to gain some insights and arrive at some conclusions. Therefore, this book is by its very nature a sort of summing up.

Moreover, as someone who helped initiate the project and then ran it from its inception, I make no pretence of having written an objective, documentary report. Anyone interested in knowing the objective story behind the project can find all the details in the archives – in the proposals, workplans, progress reports and evaluations. These are undoubtedly papers of great documentary value. The problem is that, collected together, they form nothing but the outer shell, or perhaps a frame for the whole picture.

The Early Childhood and Family Project – if it can be described in one general sentence – was a vehicle to nurture and empower deprived communities through intervention programmes. These were intended first, to meet the real needs of children and adults living in them; and second, to generate within the communities an internal movement of growth, so that with time they can provide their own services independently, without the help of external factors. That is the frame I spoke of earlier and as such it may be applicable to many other activities, so clearly showing that it does not reveal the inner contents of the project; it is only a frame, not the picture itself.

The picture is the subject of this book – the unique life story of the project. At the heart of the picture there are people, their aspirations, their struggles. It is the story of the creation of a working model that sprang from the grassroots reality, and functioned within that reality, in an ongoing process of learning and work.

And it is a story of a journey – a personal and collective journey – against the current, against the tendency to cling to habits and patterns of behaviour, against the paralysing fear of taking chances and making changes.

1. A summary of the project's aims and characteristics, as well as milestones in its brief history, is given in Appendices 1 and 2.



13

## Glossary

*Aleh*: an enrichment centre for parents and children, from birth to three years. Its aim is to reinforce the interaction between mother and child and to provide the mother with the skills to foster the motor, cognitive and emotional development of her child. The centre is equipped with games, toys, books and instruction booklets. The centre is usually run by a para-professional counsellor under the guidance of a social worker.

*Bogronim*: pre-school all-day settings for groups of 20 children aged two years six months to three years six months, intended mainly as a continuation for graduates of the family day care centres. From the Hebrew word *boger*, meaning graduate.

EMRA: an acronym from the two Hebrew words meaning mother and teacher, the EMRA Programme is the name given to the home visiting programme first developed in the Ofakim project.

HIPPY: Home Instruction Programme for Pre-school Youngsters. It was developed by Dr. Avima Lombard of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Jewish Agency: an international non-governmental body based in Jerusalem. It is the representative body of the World Zionist Organisation, which has as its main aims assisting and encouraging Jews throughout the world to help in the development and settlement of Israel. The World Zionist Organisation was first recognised in the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine as the public body responsible for all aspects of the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine and as representative of the interests of the Jewish population of that country. Throughout the Mandate period until the establishment of the State of Israel, it played the principal role in relations between the Jewish community in Palestine together with world Jewry on the one hand, and the Mandate and other powers on the other. With the establishment of the State, it relinquished many of its functions to the newly created government but continues to be responsible for immigration, land settlement, youth work, and other activities. These are financed by voluntary Jewish contributions.

*Ma'abara*: (plural *ma'abarot*) transitional immigrants' camps established in the 1950s to house the mass immigration to Israel.

MAINAS: a national association responsible for some 150 multi-purpose community centres in Israel which are mainly located in development towns and depressed urban neighbourhoods.

*Mishpahtonim* family day care centres for children aged zero to three years; centres which are based on a model which was originally developed by the MAINAS Community Centres Association and later transferred to the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare. Local women are trained in basic child care skills and authorised to open privately run but publicly supervised family day care centres in their homes. The model was adopted by the project in Morasha and adapted to fit the needs of the community. The name is based on the Hebrew word *mishpaha* which means family.

*Na'amat* Organisation of Pioneer Women: an organisation which operates family day care centres, kindergartens and clubs for men and women. It is an affiliate of the *Histadrut* (the National Labor Union). Every four years there is an election in which members elect the national and local council.

Project Renewal: a development plan for neighbourhoods designated 'distressed communities' which was undertaken in 1979 jointly by the Government of Israel and the Jewish people living outside Israel (the diaspora). The main strategy of Project Renewal is that of rehabilitation and consolidation. It is aimed at reducing the initial distress and supplying the means and tools for adequate social functioning in all spheres.

Ramat HaSharon: a settlement founded in 1924 (the State of Israel was established in 1948), at first under the name 'City of Peace'. The Morasha neighbourhood in Ramat HaSharon was founded in 1952 to provide housing for 10,000 new immigrants from Islamic countries who until then had lived in a *ma'abara*.

TEHILA: an adult education programme for Hebrew reading and writing mainly for adults from disadvantaged neighbourhoods who immigrated to Israel during the fifties before special instruction classes in Hebrew (*ulpanim*) were established.

World Sephardi Federation: an umbrella organisation of all the societies and associations of *Sephardim* (Jews of Asian or African origin). The seat of its world board is in Geneva. Among other things, the Federation gives scholarships to *Sephardic* students studying in institutions of higher learning.

Part one

# Beginnings

*Even a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step*

(An ancient Chinese proverb)

Chapter One

# Morasha: a dominion of childhood

Morasha, located at the eastern end of Ramat HaSharon, was established in the early 1950s to provide housing for immigrants, mainly from Asia and North Africa who, until the neighbourhood was built, had been living in a nearby *ma'abara*.

The gaps and disparities between East and West, so evident from the very first in Morasha, deepened over the years. As the well-established residents of Ramat HaSharon became more affluent, most of the development funds were allocated to the western part of the town, and the people of Morasha was left in the backyard clinging to the patterns of behaviour and life styles of their home countries'.

To many people, Morasha was and still is just another neighbourhood in Israel, recorded in the public mind as a centre of social deprivation, a synonym for ethnic and socio-economic gaps, a millstone around the neck of Israeli society, or as an open question demanding a solution.

These and similar attitudes are characteristic, to one degree or another, of anyone observing Morasha from without, but not to someone – like me – who was born and raised there.

For me, Morasha is first and foremost the scene of my childhood, my family home, pictures and voices stored up in memory from the days when it was surrounded on all sides by orange groves, my private Sherwood forest, the nocturnal kingdom of the jackals. And this memory also contains other pictures – the signs of neglect in the dirt roads, and the neighbourhood cafe, where the men gathered and Arabic and Hebrew blended. I also conjure up pictures of my father, in his endless search for extra work, as I tagged along, always carrying my schoolbooks so thoughtfully provided by my mother.

My parents, born in Iraq, came to Israel with the large wave of immigration after the State was established. When I, their oldest child, was born, the *ma'abara* was behind them and Morasha was their home. They had a hard time of it. My father was out of the house until nightfall, working to earn a living, and after my two brothers were born, he worked at night as well. The home was my mother's province and she did all her work within its four walls. Only later I learned how clear-cut and obvious this division of labour was to them – simply the way things were done, no questions asked and no exceptions made. But as a little girl, I was allowed to move almost unconstrainedly between these two worlds.

With Father, I went outside the bounds of the house. His involvement in the life of the community, the extra work he found as a plumber and handyman, opened many doors for me to homes in Morasha for the first time.

Later there were the long Saturday excursions to all parts of the country, organised by my father. His voice resounded throughout the bus, which was always full of people in a holiday mood. Sitting in one of the back seats, I eagerly took in all the sights

flashing by the window. On my knees, I held the knapsack prepared by my mother, in which I always found, alongside the well-packed lunch, my school books and notebooks.

With Mother, I spent my time in a different kingdom – in the intimacy of our home, in its little rooms that kept her so busy, and in the kitchen, with its overpowering aromas that were redolent of that other country, and of my mother in other times a young woman in the Zionist underground in Iraq, an avid reader, very fluent in all the dialects of Arabic, a woman in her own right. And within these four walls, she handed me the torch – to follow her path, to go on from the spot where she had stopped.

For the first fourteen years of my life, Morasha was my only playground, and like any home it was a kind of protective hothouse. I first broke out of it when I began my high school studies in the Rothberg comprehensive high school in the nearby neighbourhood of Neve Magen. But the geographical proximity never blurred the boundaries: Morasha was home; Neve Magen was the battlefield.

We were a very small group of graduates of an elementary school in Morasha who enrolled in the high school. Most of the Morasha children of my age failed to meet the entrance requirements. Some of them were sent to boarding schools in other towns, some to vocational schools, while others discontinued their studies and went out to work. And so I found myself – unwillingly – a member of a minority group, the 'Morashniks', as they called us.

At school, the relationships between us and the other pupils were a dismal copy of the broader picture. The daily encounter only underscored the differences as well as the growing sense of them, and us.

We were no more than daytime guests in the prosperous neighbourhood, and at the end of the school day we made our short-long way back home – to Morasha. It took me a whole year to grasp the fact that we were defined as a weak minority group not only by the perceptions and attitudes of 'the others', but also by the way we perceived ourselves. It was then that I realised that I had to make my way out of that 'hothouse' too.

In my second year of high school, I went to the deputy principal and suggested that we set up a school newspaper. The idea was accepted and I became its editor. I conducted two interviews which were to be featured in the first issue. One was with the school principal, and the other with the Mayor of Ramat HaSharon. These interviews, that gave me an opportunity to ask a number of incisive questions about Morasha's present situation and its future, were the first station on my journey, which was soon followed by a second.

In my third year, I was elected chairperson of the Students' Council. This was not just a personal victory, neither in my view nor anyone else's: it was the first time a

Morashnik had been elected. The decision to celebrate the occasion with a party in my home was a deliberate one. No one stayed away, not even those students who had been conditioned to think of Morasha as an off-limits den of delinquency.

I completed my four years of study in the high school with a full matriculation certificate in hand. A seemingly trivial achievement, but in fact, the fruit of a struggle. As a child of Morasha, I was not expected to demonstrate any real scholastic achievements. The very fact that I was enrolled in the high school was enough for my teachers. Ironically enough, this meant I had to make an even greater effort to force them to notice me, to stop patronising me, and to call me by my name. When they finally did notice me, they recommended that I continue my studies in a teacher training college.

At home, my parents regarded my good grades as laurels I was entitled to rest on. To them, teaching was a respectable and proper profession for a young woman who had come of age and was ready to marry and raise a family. I didn't need a very fertile imagination to picture the life they had in mind for me. I had only to look at my mother or at some of my girlfriends, recently married and already pregnant.

Our home now became the site of a pitched battle, fiercer than any I had known outside it. My aspiration to shape my own life was interpreted by my parents as insolence, and my thirst to encounter other facets of life and knowledge, as a criticism of their way of life.

When I informed my parents of my decision to join the army and, two years later, of my acceptance onto a B.A. programme at Tel-Aviv University, there was a truce but the battle was not really over. On many occasions, I felt it being waged inside me, between me and myself. As time passed, it seems to me they learned to accept me just as I learned to accept them. Perhaps, in my determination to forge my way, they even found a reflection of their own.

NOTES ON CHAPTER ONE

1. Various reports and surveys conducted on Morasha contain similar descriptions of the situation in the neighbourhood and of its residents. For example, a survey conducted in 1980 by Project Renewal (as a basis for preparing a workplan for a Renewal project in Morasha), states that: 'The residents of Morasha feel deprived in comparison to residents of other neighbourhoods in Ramat HaSharon. This feeling has been intensified particularly in view of the growth and development taking place in other parts of the town... Despite their poor housing conditions and low standard of living, the residents have a strong sense of belonging to Morasha and have close social-community ties with one another.'

   For general background information on Morasha in the early 1980s, see Appendix 3.



419

Chapter Two

## A turning point

The two years of my army service were like a vacation spent in a foreign country. It was a time of bustling activity, of long days of work and meetings with people all new to me – each of them in uniform, all with their own job to do in a large system that seemed like a separate kingdom except that all of its subjects were equal. While all this was going on, my internal clock never stopped ticking, as if it was gathering strength for the journey whose route I had not yet tried to divine. At that time, my vision consisted of just two certainties – I knew I would pursue my studies, and I knew I would return home – to Morasha.

Through the gates of the university I entered into the intricacies of European political history in the 16th to 18th centuries, and into the world of the causes and reasons in the bosom of this 'mother of all sciences'. Latin phrases were already rolling off my tongue; it was as if I held in my hand a secret key to other realms.

At the very same time – on a parallel track – I took my first steps in public life. At the University, I joined a unit for activists financed by the World Sephardi Federation. I was put in charge of directing student volunteers in their work as tutors and counsellors in schools and community centres in Morasha.

To finance my tuition and other expenses, in particular to supplement the efforts made by my father – who did all he could to help me – I worked during all of my student years: I was a secretary in the Unit for Public Activists at the University; then editor of the catalogue of the Faculty of Arts, and did other odd jobs. I also found my way into community work outside of the University as a member of the *Na'amat* Council. At the same time, I was a regular member of an informal, loosely structured body formed by eight Morasha residents of whom I was the youngest. We had nothing but ourselves and the things we had in common – no backing, no support, and no programme. We all belonged to a generation that had grown up in Morasha, children of parents who had so well learned the language of repression that it might well have been their mother tongue.

Gathering together, we discovered what each of us had long known – the sense of frustration and alienation, the inner turmoil seeking an outlet, and the refusal to reconcile ourselves to the image attached to Morasha as a place whose dwellers were doomed to lag behind.

We were not interested in coming to terms with the past. We wanted to do something for ourselves by ourselves. That's how the Morasha Council was born: first it was a kind of password between the eight of us; later, when it took on flesh and bones, principles and aims, it became a home for many other young people from Morasha – trailblazers in an inner process of awakening.

At about the same time (the end of the 1970s) the integrated system of education was introduced in Ramat HaSharon. The state schools in Morasha were closed down, and the children of the neighbourhood began travelling daily to study in the new system

schools in the more established parts of Ramat HaSharon. No one knew then whether the new method of education would really bring about the hoped-for social upheaval, nor did anyone stop to consider that, by its introduction, they were affirming the perception of Morasha as a disadvantaged neighbourhood. This perception was in fact based on the economic gaps between Morasha and the adjacent neighbourhoods. But Morasha actually suffered more than anything else from social deprivation, and this resulted mainly from the educational and cultural wasteland that prevailed there.

In the Morasha Council, we were seeking integration of another sort, that would come from within Morasha itself, that would awaken and arouse its dormant vitality. We also looked outward, devising the plan for our first significant struggle: the immediate inclusion of Morasha in Project Renewal. In the list of communities designated for inclusion in Project Renewal at the time – a list drawn up according to a scale of deprivation indicators – Morasha had been assigned 74th place, which would have meant waiting years.

We didn't have that much time. Attuned to the heartbeat of the community, we knew very well what the two most compelling trends were. First, the feeling of bitterness and alienation that was expressed in the ideas of turning Morasha into a separate municipality. The second, contrasting, trend was the one represented by the Morasha Council and those joining it. We did not want a separate local entity, since we felt that this would perpetuate the isolation of Morasha. We also did not want to fight the establishment, but rather to work together with it on our conditions – to open a new dialogue in which first priority would be assigned to the voices of Morasha residents and their involvement in shaping its image and future. Against this background, a plan of action was formulated in the Morasha Council. This plan centred on a trip to the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, not in order to demonstrate, but to talk, to explain, to persuade.

We waited a whole month to obtain a pass to the Knesset dining hall. When it arrived, we went up to Jerusalem as a group, but we spoke as individuals, each of us with that member of Knesset who was closest to his or her political leanings. The message was, of course, always the same: Morasha must be included in Project Renewal and it must be done tomorrow, because the time has come, because the community is ripe for this kind of activity, because many of its residents want to reach out, and this extended hand must not be rebuffed. After thirty days, our request was answered. The word spread to every house throughout the community – in the list of candidates for Project Renewal, Morasha was now in fourth place.

In 1980, a year after the first meeting of the Morasha Council, Project Renewal began its activities in the neighbourhood. As in many other parts of Israel, Project Renewal functioned in Morasha according to its own methods and aims, placing special emphasis on two main elements: first, physical renewal (expanding housing units; replacing the sewage system; installing lighting in public areas, etc.); and second, establishing a framework of informal education in Morasha (building community centres and social clubs for children and adults; setting up a system of help with homework and afternoon classes; establishing libraries; hiring para-professionals to work in nursery schools, and so on).

At the very same time, on the initiative of members of the Morasha Council, and with financing from Project Renewal, "My Morasha" also came into being. An internal newsletter written and edited by us, it was our voice to the community, a vehicle for disseminating information and creating the public awareness needed to bring about change.

In the search for funds to finance Project Renewal's activity, a meeting was held with representatives of the Jewish community in The Netherlands who came to Morasha. Because of my command of English, I was selected to represent the Morasha Council, whose members and supporters had gradually increased in number. This meeting, following which the Dutch Jewish community adopted Morasha, was the first link in the chain of a strong and productive relationship – a turning point in Morashà's development as well as in my own personal life.

Chapter Three

# Awakening

To me, the Morasha of those days seemed to be rousing itself from a deep slumber – stretching its limbs and groaning, its body still drowsy, but its arms and legs already unfolding. As time passed, many more residents were called upon to serve as representatives of the community on the various committees of Project Renewal, on the board of the new community centre, and in recruiting more residents to voluntary work. The Morasha Council continued to hold its meetings – a lodestone for people, ideas, quests for new ways. But now, in addition to the meetings of the Council, we were all called to other places. In this process, I found myself and my diary suddenly overloaded, reflecting in tiny letters a new kind of time – time that expands and stretches – in which the day extends into the night, and one month tugs on the shirt tails of the next.

At one and the same time, I served as a liaison between Morasha and the representatives of the Dutch Jewish community, as a member of the steering committee of Project Renewal and of the Sub-committee for Early Childhood, and as chairperson of the Family and Community Sub-committee.

During that time, I also had my own, private world, inside the bounds of the University, with the completion of my undergraduate studies, the start of my graduate studies in the history department, and with my pupils, after I was appointed as a teaching assistant.

Everything was carried on at a hectic pace, inside me and around me. The goals were still far from being achieved, and the faster we ran towards them, the further away they seemed to be. Perhaps that was due to the heightened sensitivity, perhaps to the inevitable consequences of our initial acts – like the ever-widening ripples made by a stone dropping into still waters.

Thus Morasha awakened to take a look at itself. And thus, two years after Project Renewal came into the neighbourhood, responses began to surface, and a new way forward revealed itself. From within the community, through its representatives on the various Project Renewal committees, came the call for more funds to be allocated for education, in particular programmes to nurture early childhood. And this was more than a request, it was mainly the recognition and self-admission that the domain of education was one main focus of the neighbourhood's distress. The school dropout rate of Morasha's youngsters was still high; they were still finding it difficult to attain scholastic achievements. More serious, they were returning to homes where the atmosphere remained unchanged, to parents most of whom were indifferent to, or felt incapable of taking an active part in their children's education.

In other words: many of the community's residents, particularly those who were involved, began slowly to recognise the need to concentrate nurturing activities at the roots – the toddlers, young children, and their parents – as an indispensable endeavour, which if not undertaken in time, could not be properly implemented later.

Many of the professionals involved in the rehabilitation work shared this appraisal with the community representatives. First among them was the community worker from the Ramat HaSharon Local Council, who during that time initiated the establishment of *Aleh*, an early childhood enrichment centre – the first of its kind in Morasha.

The professionals and community representatives collaborated on shaping a 'primary intervention plan', containing two interrelated elements: one – the development of frameworks for working with parents, and the other – the creation of programmes for early childhood nurturing. The emphasis on these two elements arose from the recognition of the importance and the implications of the educational process during the first years of a child's life, on the one hand, and from the recognition of the decisive role played by the parents in this process, on the other.

After all the components of the intervention plan had been formulated, a request was addressed to the Dutch Jewish Community for its financial support. A prompt reply contained the suggestion that we apply to the Bernard van Leer Foundation which, from its headquarters in Holland is engaged in supporting the development of projects for the empowerment of disadvantaged communities throughout the world. Its interest is the holistic development of children from zero to eight years, something which implies far-reaching programmes of work with their families and communities.

And while we were still wondering how to proceed, representatives of the Dutch Jewish community informed us of their coming visit to Morasha, this time with the Executive Director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Again, another gate to pass through, and again a tour through the streets of Morasha, to explain the sights they could see with their own eyes and those hidden behind walls. Again I had to break the picture down into its basic elements, to speak home truths in English, to translate pain and wishes into concrete needs, into workplans.

The Executive Director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation recommended that the Foundation participate in the rehabilitation of Morasha. However, he asked for a detailed proposal for a project, and suggested that before writing it we pay a visit to one of the projects in southern Israel supported by the Foundation, in the development town of Ofakim.

We – a group of representatives of Morasha residents and the community worker – made the trip, where we found a community whose basic needs were very similar to those of Morasha. Step by step, the main points of the programmes in operation there were laid before us – their aims, their rationale – a whole language of concepts and terms of reference, the academic jargon of professionals that translates deprivation and distress into pragmatic programmes, with stages that are well-known in advance and results that can be predicted and evaluated.

From this phase onward, I found myself involved, body and soul, in every aspect of the events taking place. I accepted incontrovertibly the need to put aside my history

books, replacing them with booklets about informal education, programmes to empower disadvantaged communities, enrichment programmes for early childhood – terms and theories that to me were like the streets of a foreign city, and yet oddly familiar.

We sat at one desk – the community worker and I – to formulate a proposal for a project in Morasha, based on the impressions of our visit to Ofakim. At the operational level the proposal was based on three major elements: programmes to train para-professional women from the community; an EMRA home visiting programme for mothers and pre-schoolers; and *Mishpahtonim*, a programme of family day care centres for toddlers and pre-school children. This was sent to the Bernard van Leer Foundation by Project Renewal and the Ramat HaSharon Local Council.

Even after the proposal came back to us for corrections, and after we spent an entire night sitting in a hotel lobby rewriting and amending it with the help of the Bernard van Leer Foundation staff member in charge of its projects in Israel, we still did not know whether the Foundation would approve the proposed project. And, if it did, how it would be set up, who would manage it, and who would run it on a daily basis.

In the autumn of 1982, we were notified that the Bernard van Leer Foundation had accepted the Morasha project and agreed to support it for four full years. At the same time, the Foundation informed us that it had accepted the recommendation of representatives of the Dutch Jewish community to offer me the position of director of the project.

In November of that year, I received the appointment and, three days later, my room at home in my parents' house became the first office of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project. Overnight, and with no preparation.

I found myself in a full-time job, with a monthly salary, engaged in the task of drawing up a project which as yet had no content, only its name and its frame, like an empty house into which I had to breathe life. In my mind's eye, I pictured the coming four years as a piece of hard stone handed to me to hew and fashion; and my only tools my twenty four years of living and a desperate desire to succeed, to prove that it could be done.

NOTES ON CHAPTER THREE

1. See Chapter 6 for a description of the nature and aims of the Early Childhood Enrichment Centre.

2. A detailed discussion of these programmes and others run by the Early Childhood and Family Education Project appears in the second part of the book, in Chapters 5 and 6, as well as in the third part, in Chapters 7 and 9.

Chapter Four

# Baptism of fire

It took almost an entire year to build the infrastructure of the Early Childhood and Family Project. Everything had to be done at the same time: designing an organisational framework; formulating programmes and modes of operation; recruiting personnel – an entire structure, from top to bottom. The first question to deal with was the organisational framework. Should the project be operated as an extension of an existing body, or as a separate, independent entity?

After consulting with the director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation-supported project in Ofakim and with professionals from the social services department of the local council, I decided that the best way to construct the organisational framework was to use the model of an association.

From the experience gained in Ofakim, I learned the intrinsic advantages of running a project as a closed economy, as an independent body, co-existing and cooperating with the existing establishment, but free to choose the appropriate way to conduct this cooperation. From Ofakim, I returned to Morasha, to a lawyer friend, also a child of Morasha, to learn from her the legal implications of the term 'association' and to work together with her on formulating the articles of the new entity – the Early Childhood Association.

In the articles of the Association, stress was laid on the principle that was to guide the staffing of its board and its operation as a decision-making body: that representatives of Morasha would be given priority. Accordingly, it was decided that representatives of the residents would constitute a majority on the board of the Association (55 per cent of its members), and would serve on it voluntarily, side by side with representatives of governmental, municipal and other institutions.

At the same time, it was decided that the grant funds from the Bernard van Leer Foundation would be transferred to the Association through the Renewal Department of the Jewish Agency, which accepted the responsibility for assisting the project with its financial management, in public information activities and in obtaining public support.

Once the framework was drawn up in principle, people had to be brought in. It was then, for the first time, that I went out to recruit human resources for the project which was still rather like my own well-kept secret, existing only in my mind, within the four walls of my room and in an ever-growing pile of draft papers, letters, booklets, lists of things to do.

My first objective was Morasha – the old timers among its residents whom I had known since childhood, from the day I learned to walk. And now I came to them, knocking at the doors of their homes, at the chambers of their hearts, to enlist them in voluntary work for the good of the project, to convince them to join the board of the Association as representatives of the community.

At the time Project Renewal had been active in Morasha for about three years, so I met many residents who already felt the need and the desire to take some action to bring about change in the neighbourhood and in the community. There were also some residents already active on committees and public boards as part of Project Renewal or the community centre. Not a single one of them, however, made my task any easier. Each of them, in their own way, wanted to know what was concealed behind the name Bernard van Leer, and what good yet another project would do for Morasha, and how its objectives differed from those of Project Renewal, and where the funds would be invested, and how decisions would be taken, and why should it be an association. And you, Simcha Salach, where are you in this picture, whose side are you on?

I explained, and preached and cajoled, trying to instill in them my deep-seated conviction that now, after long years of incessant frustration, anger and alienation, we – the residents of Morasha – were being given the opportunity to bring about, **through our own effort**, the change we so fervently desired. And as I talked to them, I was also talking to myself, clarifying, elucidating, charting the next step, dispelling doubts, and moving ahead. Time after time, I asked for their help, tried to gain their support for a project that for me was summed up in a watchword: within the community and for the community.

When there were enough Morasha residents standing by me, when I was no longer the only person in the community who viewed the planned project as a real opportunity, the time came to engage official institutions and organisations in talks, to persuade them to give the project their active support, by serving, as representatives of the establishment, on the founding body of the Association and its board. In face-to-face talks, I again outlined the project's master plan, offering them the only recompense I could – the opportunity to become partners in an extraordinary collaboration, to give of themselves in an act of creation.

Thus, one after the other, representatives of the state and municipal establishment joined the board of the Association in its formative stage. They came from the Jewish Agency, from the local authority, from government ministries, serving side by side with representatives of various voluntary organisations and with the Israeli representatives of the Dutch Jewish community and the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

The Early Childhood Association was established *ad hoc* in 1982, and officially approved in the summer of 1983.

While I was totally immersed in setting up the first board of the Association – the essential formal basis for operating the project as an autonomous body, both financially and operationally – the Bernard van Leer Foundation requested a detailed workplan for the first year of activity, along with a report on the course of events and the rate of progress.

My trips to Ofakim became more frequent. Under the guidance of the veteran director of the project, I was learning the accepted patterns of work in projects supported by the Foundation, ranging from the preparation of a detailed budget proposal with line-

by-line explanations, the translation of the project proposal into operational language, a formulated workplan for a year's activity, to the preparation of progress reports.

The need to find professionals to work with me in constructing and implementing programmes became urgent and pressing. Here too I was assisted by the director of the project in Ofakim, who introduced me to the first educational coordinator to work on the project. She not only had to her credit professional know-how and references, but she had also become thoroughly familiar with the Foundation's working procedures, during her six years of work at the Ofakim project.

By that time, the Early Childhood and Family Project already had a home of its own – a small room in the Morasha community centre vacated for us by the director of the centre, who had also grown up in the neighbourhood. The project also had a secretary, a book keeper had been hired, and a bank account opened for the first time.

We worked around the clock – the educational coordinator and I – crystallising ideas, incorporating them into the first workplan and a budget proposal, and getting all this material ready for translation into English, in preparation for my first trip to The Netherlands, to the Bernard van Leer Foundation, to attend a two-week seminar for new project directors.

We also spent long hours with the Association board, particularly with the Morasha representatives, bridging the gap between The Netherlands and Israel, explaining that the Foundation does not simply donate money, but is rather a professional network with a specific, singular orientation, with whom the dialogue – in the shape of workplans, budget proposals and progress reports submitted for its examination and approval – was an inseparable part of the contract. I also had to explain that the Foundation insists that the recipients of grants meet defined working standards and procedures in the interest of high quality output.

In February 1983, I left Israel for The Netherlands carrying, tightly packed in my suitcase, the first fruits of our labours for the Foundation's approval.

The fortnight at the seminar for new directors seemed to me, at one and the same time, like one long day and like one whole year. Rubbing shoulders with project directors from all corners of the globe, I realised for the first time that Morasha was not an only child, that there were many communities like it, although they spoke a different language and were in distant countries. While I was taking notes, filling my notebook with tables and terms and working principles – Van Leer language and codes – I sensed for the first time the full force of affiliation with an organisation that has branches in every continent. Inwardly, I felt like a fish suddenly snatched out of a pond and thrown into a river; out of my element, yet somehow belonging at the same time.

When it was my turn to introduce myself – the only historian among educators, psychologists and social workers – when the time came for me to outline the aims of the project under my direction, I was the only one who had brought with me my community, the home in which I had grown up. Then, inside the circle of my new

colleagues, I saw myself through their eyes, and realised that for them Morasha and I are one and the same.

I returned home, bringing with me the Foundation's approval of our workplan[12] and the budget proposal. This approval meant just one thing – it was time to take some real action, right inside the community.

The focus of the planned activity was the training course for para-professionals. Its aim was to take a group of women from the community and train them as counsellors and care givers as part of EMRA (a home visiting programme for mothers) and the family day care centre programme.

The project viewed this course as the first and essential stage in the intervention programme in the community, because of its perception that personal development and collective progress always stem from a process of learning that demands effort, investment and willingness.

In other words: the para-professional training course was primarily a vehicle for empowering and nurturing individuals in the community, and at a later stage – a vehicle for empowering the entire community, through the operation of educational programmes for parents and children run by women who came from within the community and were trained by the project, not only to serve as counsellors and care givers, but to act as role models in the community and as a catalyst for a process of real and lasting change.

The perception of the training course as an essential and fundamental prerequisite for the activities of the project and of the intervention programme in the community was, in fact, one of the project's singular and original characteristics.[13]

The educational coordinator and I decided how to divide between us the work of actually constructing the first training course. She was responsible for two major tasks. The first was writing a training curriculum with an emphasis on broader objectives such as the simultaneous training of counsellors and care givers. The second was engaging lecturers for the course. I undertook the task of recruiting candidates for the course and coordinating it once it was set up.

I approached the task with enthusiasm, composing a notice, going in and out of print shops, looking for the right colour, the appropriate layout, the most attractive typeface.

Afterwards, helped by anyone ready to lend a hand, carrying sellotape, thumbtacks and nails, we made our way through all the streets of Ramat HaSharon, and of Morasha in particular, posting the notices announcing the opening date of the planned course, in the new project, sponsored by the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

In the project office – still a small room in the community centre – I continued with the ongoing administrative work. And I waited.

13

The longer I waited, the more I was assailed by doubts. And in my apprehension, I found myself wandering around the neighbourhood, checking to see if the notices were still in place. No one had removed them. No one had responded to them.

Once again I went out into the streets, recruiting the help of community workers and social workers who had been active in Morasha. We went together, step by step, on foot, to the community, to speak with the people of the community. We sat in the Family Health Clinic, in the Sick Fund clinic and in the community centre – waiting for the women, chatting with them, telling them about the project, about the training course, about the Early Childhood Association, trying to identify potential candidates who would meet the course's admission requirements. And once again explaining, handing them questionnaires, jotting down their names, and moving on, to the supermarket, to the small grocery stores.

I also approached the director of the kindergarten department of the local council, asking for a meeting with all the kindergarten teachers in the district and their supervisor from the Ministry of Education. That meeting would be an opportunity to present the project to them, to obtain their permission to send a written message to the mothers through their children, and to get a small corner in the kindergarten in which to place application forms for the training course.

A similar request was made to the coordinator of the HIPPY Programme, asking her permission to get the message across to the mothers of Morasha through the programme's counsellors. I also approached the coordinator of the TEBEA Programme for adult education in Morasha, with whose help I reached the older women who were learning to read and write, and through them, their daughters and their daughters-in-law.

Day in, day out, in the oppressive summer heat, I visited the homes of Morasha – friends and neighbours of my age, as well as older and younger women – from door to door, face to face, shaking hands, calling on them to sign up for the training course, to join with me in acting together for our own sake.

The project's educational coordinator joined me in this campaign to get to know the residents of Morasha intimately, to learn their needs, to try already to spot potential candidates for the second and third training courses, to try to find candidates whose homes were suitable for family day care centres.

As the number of home visits grew, together we drew up a special form on which to record details and impressions. These were the initial steps in a long process of learning combined with doing, in a project that had to create everything itself – channels of communication, work procedures and patterns of behaviour.

Gradually, the walls of silence and passivity were breached. As the date set for opening the training programme approached, the list of participants was filled. At the same time, we completed the task of drawing up a curriculum and scheduling the lecturers. These were professionals who had agreed to teach on the course as part of their work in Morasha, without any additional recompense. In this way, we succeeded in keeping the cost of the course low: the professionals brought with them not only

theoretical knowledge but also the fruits of their practical experience in working with the Morasha community. By hiring the teaching staff from among professionals employed by the local community services, we also expected to create new channels of communication and more direct and closer ties between the providers of the services and their recipients.

The training course for para-professional counsellors and care givers, the first of its kind in Morasha and the project's first leap forward, ended in October 1983. Its graduates – twenty women – were the first tender shoots of a unique local leadership, which had sprung forth not out of lofty words, but rather out of hardy seeds in a once harsh soil that, against all odds, we had made fertile.

For me, the last day of the course was a landmark, a sign that the time had come to announce publicly that the project was really under way. At the Morasha community centre, under the aegis of the Mayor and of the Director of the Renewal Department of the Jewish Agency, and in the presence of many, many residents of Morasha, along with professionals and representatives of government and municipal agencies, diplomas were awarded to the graduates of the training course – pathfinders of a project that together with them had been accorded approval and recognition.

The journalists and photographers I had invited all attended, and in the weekend supplements of the newspapers I saw in black and white reports of the event – the Early Childhood and Family Project had come into its own.

The morning after, and the following days found me gradually withdrawing from all public and political activity, taking on the new identity that had been assigned to me – director of the project. That became the central, nearly exclusive, path into which I channelled all of my energies.

The morning after also presented pressing needs – one after another, all of them interrelated and all demanding an immediate solution. We had to complete the task of formulating the EMIA Programme for home visits; we had to locate suitable homes in which to run family day care centres, we had to engage more professionals, we had to turn the graduates of the first para-professionals course into a cohesive team, and we had to persuade some of them to participate in the family day care centre programme, since all of them wanted to be EMIA counsellors.

Added to all these tasks, there were long meetings lasting into the night with the board of the Association, which was learning its function, and there was the requirement of the Bernard van Leer Foundation that we begin immediately working on the preparation of the necessary professional infrastructure for evaluation of the project.

At first, I thought this was the nature of all beginnings, that this is how it was when one tries to build a complete system by breaking new ground, when each day is another wall to be breached, and the night is only for renewing ones strength for the day ahead, for the next task.

This then was the start of the project's story, but its continuation was no different: a constant journey, its waystations the objectives that must be attained, the needs that must be translated into programmes, the programmes that must be implemented and constantly re-examined. And all in a continuous movement into the field, into the Morasha community, and back into the project.

Through this movement, and parallel with it, the project became a living, breathing body, and all of its vital organs were people: professional teams, para-professional teams, an evaluation team, secretaries, a book keeper, a legal advisor, and a Management Board.

They all had their stories, closely interwoven into the annals of the Early Childhood and Family Project, as they were recorded in my mind – like a mosaic, like blobs of colour merging to create a portrait.

NOTES ON CHAPTER FOUR

1. In this connection, it is worth bearing in mind that in building the infrastructure for the project, I was assisted by people from Morasha, community activists, as well as professionals, some of them childhood friends from Morasha.

2. Chapter 10 is devoted to a detailed discussion of the organisational and formal aspects of the Early Childhood and Family Project.

3. The rationale behind the addition of representatives of the establishment to the Association, and the relationship between the establishment and the Association, are discussed in Chapter 10.

4. This plan was based on a working model employed at the Bernard van Leer Foundation-supported project in Ofakim. It incorporated a home visiting programme and a programme to train para-professional counsellors. The family day care centre programme, on the other hand, was already being operated in many parts of the country by the MATNAS Association of Community Centres. On the recommendation of the Director of Social Services in the local authority, we decided to adopt it and operate it within the framework of the Early Childhood and Family Development Project.

5. All of the programmes, their aims and the dynamics they created in the community and the project team are discussed at length in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

6. The training course is extensively discussed in Chapter 6.

Part two:

# Taking a theory, making it work

*One act is better than a thousand dreams*

(Reb Shalom Dov Baer of Lubavitch)

# Inside the community: the background, the rationale, the vision

There is nothing simpler than giving a gift to someone holding out an empty hand, nothing easier than providing crutches to someone who has given up trying to walk on his own two feet. A rehabilitation programme of that ilk is a simple task with results that are quick and visible but, by the same token, short-lived. Frequently, it does more damage than good, not to the giver of the gift, but to the one who keeps coming back to accept it, each time weaker, more dependent, less and less himself.

The Early Childhood Association eschewed this approach, and kept its damaging effects in mind to avoid a patronising and know it all attitude in its work. This stricture gave rise to a certain degree of humility and restraint, some do's and don'ts, some yardsticks with which to measure the quality of the Association's work.

At the centre of the Early Childhood Association's concerns and aims was the need to empower and foster the development of members of the second and third generations in Morasha' – young children and their parents. The dominant reason for this focus was that in general gaps between weaker and stronger communities are first manifested in the area of child education. The continued neglect of education and the failure to recognise its importance and implications exacerbate the process which causes internal distress and feelings of inferiority and helplessness to become rooted.

In the face of this reality, children's education was placed at the forefront of the Association's activity, not as its sole aim but as a basic orientation for a comprehensive intervention programme that rested on two fundamental approaches. The first of these was that, to achieve aims in the area of early childhood education in disadvantaged communities, one has to plan and operate programmes targeted directly at the children. At the same time one has to create an empowering and integrated frame of working with the children's socialisation agents, with those who play a role in their education. In order to bring about real change in this area, one must foster and guide both the children and the adults around them, beginning with the family unit and ending with the entire community.

The second basic orientation was that rehabilitation and empowering intervention programmes must develop through a process of working and learning within the communities themselves, and must meet their real needs. The community as well as its individuals – children and adults – should be helped to break out of the vicious circle of deprivation, so that, when prepared and ready, they will be able to provide their own services without dependence on outside assistance. Consequently, an intervention programme with rehabilitative aims ought to be limited in time, to prevent it from becoming self perpetuating and thus its own *raison d'être*.

These two fundamental approaches were translated into principles of action on two main levels. The first level is the development and operation of programmes to empower individuals within the community by imparting knowledge, tools and methods for coping with problems and difficulties in early childhood education, in the family and the society. The second level is the provision of direct and indirect

assistance by operating the educational programmes and by empowering individuals in the community. This encourages a process of growth and development of local leadership that can empower the entire community and induce it to take a responsible stand in relation to its situation and its image.

The attempt to initiate and foster processes of real change in the area of early childhood and the family led to the realisation that education for parenting was the most important focus of our work. The emphasis needed here was on strengthening the parents (the mothers, in particular) and on developing their awareness of the importance of education and their active involvement in it. In the wider picture, the family was perceived as the basic unit of the community whose rehabilitation as a whole meant inner growth towards independence. In other words: underlying the Early Childhood Association's activity was the appreciation of the community's latent potential for growth and the realisation that this potential could only be revealed and fulfilled if it was given the proper soil and conditions by the community itself – never from the outside and never in the form of nurturing programmes inflicted on the community from above.

To achieve this aim, the Early Childhood Association had to create a synthesis between rehabilitative theories and the actual needs of the community. To do this, it was necessary, among other things, to try to uproot, both inside and outside the Association, the accepted uni-directional model of providers of services versus receivers of services, of professionals with knowledge and authority versus a passive community, unaware of its real needs and therefore deprived of the right to speak and the ability to make any decisions about its own process of renewal.

On the face of it and in hindsight, these aims may seem to constitute a clear cut, quite obvious, theory. But things were different in the early days of the Early Childhood Association, when we already possessed the mandate for action, but still had to set a compass course and chart a map based on our thoughts and wishes.

When the desire to act is so strong, and when the needs seem so apparent, it takes an extraordinary effort to stop for a moment, to reexamine the issues and to withstand the temptation to adopt the first solutions that present themselves.

We spent long hours and days together – representatives of the Morasha community, professionals who joined the Association's board, and I – to formulate the infrastructure for the activities of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project. In this process – which then seemed like a journey without an end – we went outside the community to see what was being done in other projects, we repeatedly perused the needs assessments, the analyses and recommendations of professionals from the community and outside, we studied educational programmes for early childhood and the family. Finally, we gathered together again for an intensive workshop to show and share the information we had gleaned. And just when we thought that the picture was clear, the needs were known, the target population was defined, the educational programmes were sufficient in number, we experienced the growing sense that something was still missing.

The difficulty confronting us then, was the problem of translating into a rationale that something which was missing, that something which might come from answering the key questions to which we found no answers in the statistical data nor even in the rehabilitation programmes: 'How to prevent the project from becoming yet another basket of educational activities, another rehabilitative framework that provides services to the community free of charge, and by doing so, increases and nourishes its dependence?'; 'How to make the community itself spawn the project, to avoid creating another framework of experts who come from outside and remain outside?'; and 'How to awaken the community – not to increased consumption, not to old/new dependency, but rather to unleash its hidden strengths, to arouse its desire for change and enhance its ability to change, to make its people turn their deprivation into motivation and their suppressed desires into a driving force?'

These questions, which we translated into a rationale, into objectives, sparked the fire that gave warmth and light to the project's activities over the years: in its light, for example, the programmes, achievements and failures were examined. In other words, the project's driving force did not come from well defined and accepted answers, but rather from an ongoing effort to ask the very same questions each day anew, in order not to forget the search, not to lose our way in the hustle and bustle of the project's daily activities.

NOTES ON CHAPTER FIVE

1. In the second phase of the project's activity in additional communities – Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva – an attempt was made to apply the rationale and programmes that were first developed in Morasha. For a detailed discussion, see Chapter 9.

2. Representatives of the community, professionals who worked in the community (including social workers, community workers, directors of day care centres, nurses at family health clinics, staff of the psychological service), as well as experts from the Tel Aviv University School of Social Work, were invited to the workshop.

# For the sake of the community: the programmes, the activities, the tasks

The work of translating and applying the rationale, the principles and the strategies established above was expressed in educational and community programmes, the continuing as well as the one-off programmes, all of them designed to provide an answer to the community's needs in a constant process of learning, evaluating and drawing conclusions.

This chapter is devoted to a description of the main programmes operated by the Early Childhood and Family Project. Yet it is important to reemphasise, without detracting from the importance of these programmes, that the objective behind all of the project's activities was the community. We, in the project, perceived the programmes as means, vehicles through which we could arrive at our objective. In other words, we were not trying to adapt the community to the programmes, but to do everything possible to formulate, revise and update programmes so they would suit the community's real needs. For this reason, these programmes were tested, developed and modified during the course of their implementation, on the basis of reactions to them and their results in the field, as well as on the basis of new needs that were identified and defined throughout the project's operation.

**Training para-professional early childhood counsellors and care givers.**[1]

The key, vital component in the range of activities undertaken by the Early Childhood and Family Education Project was the programme to train women and mothers to work as para-professional counsellors in education for parenting and early childhood care, and as care givers.

There were two main reasons for the centrality of this programme, both of them directly linked to the strategies and operating principles discussed in the previous chapter. First, this course gave the women participants the chance to acquire the knowledge and skills they needed for their personal development and for the advancement of their families, while providing them with new opportunities for empowerment and employment as para-professional counsellors and care givers in educational and community programmes for parents and children. Second, the training activities also served as a vehicle for empowering the community from within, since they were first and foremost a framework for developing groups of women who would later play an active role in running educational programmes in the community (chiefly EMRA and the Family Day Care Centres programme). As time passed, these para-professional counsellors and care givers became both agents of change and role models within the community in general and among the women in particular. Moreover, they served as a bridge between the residents of the community and the agencies and professionals that provided it with services.

The target population of the training programme were women, many of them mothers, from within the community, who had a basic formal education of 10 to 12 years, personal motivation, the readiness to make a contribution to their neighbours and the potential to inspire others in the community.

22

To achieve the objectives of the programme in practice, stress was placed on improving the trainees' self-image and on giving them support in addition to knowledge and new tools. This would enable them, by themselves, to improve first and foremost the quality of life in their own families and to play an active role in the education of their children. A special effort was devoted to creating a supportive and empowering atmosphere in the training programme, and to encouraging the trainees to increase their spouses' involvement in fostering family life in general and their children's education in particular.

All of this was designed to help and to encourage the trainees to exhibit initiative and to play an active role – during the training period and thereafter – in their own development and that of their families, as well as in the task of empowering the community.

The para-professionals training course, as it was designed and run by the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, was intended to simultaneously train both counsellors and care givers in one educational setting.

During the planning and implementation stages, a great deal of attention was devoted to the fact that each group of trainees would be distinct and each would have distinct needs. While it provided the trainees with the skills and professional knowledge they required to work as counsellors and care givers, the programme was also aimed at enhancing and developing their own resources of knowledge and life experience. For although the purpose of the training was to provide its participants with new knowledge and specific skills, it never intended to erase – on the contrary, it even tried to enrich – their traditions and lifestyles, and their experience and attitudes in relation to family life, to the rearing of their children and to relationships within the community. Furthermore, along with the activities designed to impart theoretical knowledge, special emphasis was laid on experiential learning and activities in order to teach them concrete methods of applying the knowledge they were acquiring. Therefore, a great deal of time was devoted to practical work under close guidance and supervision, and to creating initial channels of communication between the future para-professionals and the professionals working in the community.

In addition, the training programme served as a framework for enriching the trainees' general education and enhancing their self-image and faith in their ability to develop, and to help themselves and others.

It was vital to bear in mind that the women who participated in the training programmes were not only representing themselves. In their expectations, their way of thinking, their needs and problems, they reflected – directly and authentically – the entire community.

For this very reason, their return to the community as para-professionals was extremely effective. Due to their ability to create direct ties with parents and children in the community, they personified the process of replacing apathy and dependency with a responsible and active approach. By changing their status from those being helped to those giving help, these women were also the harbingers of future change in the community.

This was the paramount aim of the training programme run by the project. However, to achieve it we had to invest conscious and deliberate efforts which went beyond the actual curriculum of the programme. In itself a para-professional training course is not a magic formula that can bring about real and lasting change among its participants and in the community. The fact that this training programme run by the project was unique, and was a springboard for personal and collective growth, was not an outcome of the very existence of the programme or its formal contents. Its resounding success was due to the way we conceived its role in the project's programme of activities, a conception that was expressed in the way the course was conducted, in the attitude towards the trainees, and in the relationship that evolved among themselves, and between them and the project staff.

From the outset, we did not conceive of the training programme as a vehicle for producing counsellors and care givers, but rather as a first, vital step of the project on its path into the community – to develop the vanguard into whose hands we could entrust the project's programmes for empowering children and parents in the community. We viewed the women who came to the training programme as our potential partners in the act of creating the project, without whom the project could not be realised.

Based on this approach, a distinctive atmosphere took shape, which characterised all seven courses of the training programme. It was an atmosphere of belonging, of partnership, of an extended family in which there is no room for formalities or partitions. For example, the teaching staff of the programme comprised professionals who were working inside the community – the paediatrician, the nurse, the social worker, the psychologist – who were well known to the women in the course. This fact was very helpful in fostering the community and family atmosphere, and preventing the erection of formal partitions.

It is important to reemphasise that, in many respects, the project's training programme resembled programmes offered in various institutions in Israel for training para-professional workers. Nevertheless, it was distinctive and singular, not in its curriculum content, but because it was a supportive and enabling framework for all the women who were involved. In our view, the need to promote a family atmosphere, a sense of belonging to a sort of special social club, whose members did not join only to be trained for work, but to become part of a project which from the outset belonged to them and was taking place in their own home, was no less important than the curriculum, the formal requirements and the demand for achievement.

And inside their own home, mistakes were permitted, and personal experiences from the past and the present were considered relevant – no less so than academic theories. Their experience as women, as wives and mothers was – for the first time in their lives – accorded recognition, legitimation and significance. Along with the means and opportunities to understand themselves better, they also gained support and belief in their ability to harness their inner energies and strengths for the good of the entire community. Moreover, during the training programme the women also learned about the community in which they lived. For example, in order to gain experience and

apply the knowledge they learned in the classroom, the trainees conducted interviews with professionals in the community and observations in day care centres and nursery schools run in the community by various agencies. These interviews and observations were summarised and reported orally and in writing, and, in many instances, helped the project's professional staff to become better acquainted with the community.

In this way, the women in the programme became active partners in the act of creating the project during the course of their training, even before they became counsellors and care givers.

One means of achieving their active participation was by asking them to fill out evaluative questionnaires at the end of each week. These questionnaires enabled us to learn their opinions about the content of the course, the methods of teaching, the lecturers, and the atmosphere prevailing in the classrooms. This procedure was carried out not only as part of the programme evaluation, but also – and perhaps mainly – to provide the professional staff with constant feedback from the programme, to enable them to stay attuned to the feelings of the trainees as individuals and representatives of the community, and to give the trainees a sense of power and authority as partners in shaping the programme.

Thus, the recognition that the women in the training programme and the process they were undergoing constituted a microcosm of the project itself was the most salient feature of the programme as it was run by the Early Childhood and Family Education Project. This recognition, which was translated into distinctive teaching methods and patterns of communication, was the thread that ran throughout the various components of the programme, on the basis of which behavioural patterns and work norms were shaped and became a hallmark of the project throughout its existence.

### The EMRA Home Visiting Programme

The aim of the EMRA programme, run by para-professional counsellors from inside the community, was to provide counselling, enrichment and assistance to mothers of young children, aged from zero to four years.

The programme was based mainly on individual counselling given to the mothers in their homes, and group counselling for several mothers at a time.

The target population of the programme was parents encountering difficulties in raising their children, or parents who demonstrated a low level of awareness and knowledge in relation to their children's needs. EMRA was also introduced as a preventive programme, among families identified and defined as being at high risk.

The task of locating candidate families to participate in EMRA was accomplished in the main by three groups of people: first, the staff of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project (i.e. the professional staff and the para-professional staff counsellors and care givers); second, the nurses of the local Family Health Clinic, and third, the social workers from the social services department of the local council.

After the families were located, home visits and initial interviews were conducted to find out if they were suitable for the programme, to gain an impression of the atmosphere in the home, and to observe the family and the children's developmental status.

The rationale underlying the operation of the EMRA programme was based on two main assumptions. The first was that parents play a vital role in children's lives and have the most dominant influence on the process of their growth and the shaping of their characters. Parents constitute a primary role model for their children in learning ways of relating to various life dimensions, such as self-value, the limits of their ability, emotional and mental involvement, human communication, social behaviour, motivation, curiosity and creativity. In practice, parents serve as mediators between children and the world around them. They are the ones who introduce children to the environment and through them children learn its significance. The family is, therefore, the most effective system for fostering children's development, but to the same extent it may be the most inhibiting factor.

The second basic assumption is that the early childhood years are the most critical period in children's development – a process influenced directly and decisively by the intimate environment and by the amount and quality of stimulation it offers. Thus, it determines children's frames of reference to themselves and to the outside world, as well as their level of cognitive, emotional, social and psychomotor development. For all these reasons, the nurturing of children in the early years of life is of utmost importance.

The objectives of the EMRA programme are all aimed at creating a process of change among the parents – especially the mothers – in three major domains:

**in the domain of awareness and attitudes** the programme aspires to improve and strengthen the parents' self-image in their role as the central educational figures in their children's lives, and to enhance their self and social awareness;

**in the domain of knowledge** the programme aspires to provide the parents – via the mother – with knowledge about children's development in the early years and thereafter, about the significance and implications of their being mediators between children and their environment, about the importance of the bond between them and their children;

**in the domain of skills** the programme aspires to teach the parents methods and means of healthy and empowering communication with their children, to develop their awareness of daily situations as a broad vista for learning, stimulation and experience for their children.

In addition, the programme aims at providing parents with information about the services available in their community, to encourage them to undertake personal responsibility and to exhibit greater involvement in their children's education in educational and community settings.

The programme was run by para-professional counsellors – women and mothers from within the community – with the help and guidance of the coordinator of the programme and the professional staff of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project.

A limited time period was allocated in advance for contact between the para-professional and the family (six to eleven months). The counsellors met with the mothers and their children once a week in their home, or in a group of several mothers which also served as a support group and a framework for contacts between the mothers themselves.

Each of the weekly meetings between mothers and the counsellor lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and this duration was set according to the ages and needs of the children, as well as the situation and needs of the mothers. Each visit was devoted to a specific subject, or to some defined activity, at first for explaining and imparting knowledge and skills to the mother, and later, for applying the lessons learned with her children.

The workplan, which consisted of very varied activities and experiences in all domains of development, was not pre-structured in detail but was gradually developed during the work with the family, according to each family's special circumstances, specific needs and rate of progress.

In each of the activities included in the EMRA programme, mothers learned, with the counsellor's help, to enable their children to learn first and foremost through self discovery, by giving expression to their creativity. At the same time, the mothers learned to accompany their children's activity with mediated learning. Attention was devoted to the gradual development of a flexible attitude towards children, that is, mothers learned to respond to the child's behaviour and needs in a manner compatible with their personality and age. The counsellors engaged with the mothers, through direct experience, in an analysis of children's behaviour, and in identifying specific ways to cope positively with it.

Personal ties and a relationship of mutual trust naturally developed between para-professional counsellors and mothers, who also received personal reinforcement in a process of learning and partnership, in particular when the shared work began to produce results and to manifest a concrete expression in the life of children and the family as a whole.

The EMRA programme was intended primarily to meet the immediate needs of parents and children in their community. Beyond this aim, the programme played an educational role in the entire community. One way in which it did this was by strengthening the perception that the parents are the child's first educator, and that also reinstated commitment and responsibility to their natural and proper place. The message here was: education is not only a matter for experts; parents have the duty and the right to be involved in their children's education from the moment of their birth.

This means, on the one hand, that the community has an obligation to empower the individuals in it – parents and children alike, and on the other hand, that individuals bear the personal and social responsibility for themselves, their families and their community as a whole.

In this connection, it is worth noting that among the mothers who participated in the EMRA programme, some later enrolled in the programme for training para-professional counsellors and care givers, and after their training made their contribution to other mothers and to the community.

### *Mishpahtonim*: The Family Day Care Centres Programme

The Family Day Care Centres Programme – a system of day care and educational centres for toddlers and infants (aged zero to three) – was run by para-professional care givers in their own homes, with the organisational assistance of the Early Childhood Association, and with close guidance by both the programme coordinator and the professional staff of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project. Each day care centre served as a stimulating and enriching educational environment for five to ten children; and, indirectly, as a supportive and empowering framework for their parents. These centres accepted children whose mothers wanted to go out to work or to study, children of families in distress, children at risk, children from single-parent families, and children from very large families.

The Family Day Care Centres Programme was not intended to serve as a replacement for regular day care centres, but rather to provide an additional facility to meet the growing need for educational and care giving frameworks for toddlers. However, the family day care centres do offer educational advantages: they are limited in size; are run in a relaxed, family atmosphere; and they enable each child to get individual attention. In this framework, the para-professional care giver can also relate to various problems raised by the parents, helping to meet the needs they have about their children's care, and when necessary, referring them to other services in the community.

The programme's objectives related to four target populations - the children, the parents, the care givers themselves, and the community.

**For the children**, the programme provided an intimate and empowering educational and care giving environment where, in the company of other children of their age, their developmental needs could be met.

Furthermore, the day care centres were helpful in identifying developmental problems among children and treating these problems in their early stages. Equally, they served as a primary framework for identifying and nurturing gifted children.

**For the parents** the day care centres attempted to enable and encourage mothers to advance and develop professionally and personally; to enhance the parents' awareness of the needs of their young children; and to encourage their involvement in

their education in general and in the day care centre in particular. They also helped families in the community to get to know each other better.

**For the para-professional counsellors** the family day care programme served as a framework in which they could apply what they had learned and as an opportunity for personal, social and economic advancement.

**For the community at large** the centres fulfilled several purposes. First they fostered a service based on high professional and educational criteria, which gradually led to improvements in the level of services provided for young children, and reduced the need for non-professional, unsupervised care giving services. The hope was that the para-professional care giver running a family day care centre would serve as a role model for other women in the community, encouraging them to learn, to advance, to initiate educational projects in the community or to make a contribution to the existing ones.

The programme was also intended to provide a daily permanent framework to help parents cope with problems of child rearing – through counselling by the care giver, or by applying to educational, psychological and other services in the community. Thus, the purpose of disseminating the programme in the community was to effect a process of change in patterns of thinking and behaviour, and in the end, to lead to a process of self healing in all strata of the community.

***Bogranicza* Pre-schools**

The pre-schools – an all day educational and care giving framework for children, aged two years six months to three years six months – was in a sense a continuation of the Family Day Care Centre Programme, but differed from it in a number of aspects.

The pre-school was a framework for a group of 20 children (in contrast to five to ten children in the family day care centres). Its activity was conducted in community and public buildings – kindergartens or the community centre – and run by qualified kindergarten teachers, each of them assisted by three para-professionals – an assistant teacher, a house-mother and a care giver. The family day care centres were run by the para-professional care givers alone, in their own homes.

Moreover, an important feature of the programme was the high degree of parental involvement. The parents took part in planning the children's activities, in the organisational responsibility for running the pre-school, in taking turns working at the pre-school, and in arranging activities for special events.

The pre-schools programme was the first significant sign that the project's activity was succeeding, since it came into being to fulfil needs presented from within the community by parents who, on their own initiative, applied to the project and asked for another educational and care giving programme, one which differed in several important aspects from parallel programmes already in operation there.

Based on the needs presented by the parents, the Pre-schools programme was formulated as a framework operated throughout the day (from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.), to enable mothers to go out to work or to study (unlike most of the kindergartens run by the local council and the Ministry of Education for children in this age group, which are open only in the mornings, from 8:30 to 12:30). In addition, enrolment in the pre-schools was limited to no more than 20 children (unlike the all day pre-schools run by the local council which enrolled as many as 30 children). Another unique feature of the pre-school was the fact that it was an integrated framework for children from families of disparate backgrounds and socio-economic levels, with fees adjusted for families of very limited means. (The fees were 30 per cent lower than those in parallel frameworks, thanks to the subsidy granted by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, as part of its support for the programmes of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project).

And finally, the Pre-schools programme was designed mainly for graduates of the family day care centres, to ensure their continued nurturing and enrichment according to a supervised programme suited to their needs.

In this context, it is important to reiterate that the programme was operated on a high professional level. The pre-schools were run, as stated, by qualified kindergarten teachers, with the assistance of para-professionals: graduates of the project's training programme. Moreover, in addition to the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the quality of the programme was monitored as part of the project's evaluation activity.

Although the programme's target population was children who had attended the family day care centres, other children were also accepted to the programme, both in order to meet the needs of other families for support, and to extend the circle of children participating in the project's educational work.

The programme had three major aims. The first was to ensure the children's continued development in a systematic and monitored way, including observations by the programme's coordinator and the staff of the pre-school, to identify individual needs and to diagnose special problems.

The second objective was to provide the children with the knowledge, skills and habits required for their smooth integration into the formal educational system. To achieve this aim, the programme of activities in the pre-school was adapted to the curriculum of the Ministry of Education for kindergartens. Moreover, the pre-schools offered enrichment activities in music, movement and creativity, as well as activities to develop spatial orientation and motor abilities.

The third objective of the programme was to endow the parents with knowledge and skills to help them in the task of nurturing and educating their children, and to train them to fill organisational and educational roles in the programme.

The parents were called on to become actively involved even before the school year began, when they were invited to attend a preparatory course, consisting of four

sessions. These meetings were devoted to clarifying expectations, to developing collaboration between parents and the pre-school staff and to lectures on basic knowledge in the area of childhood education and development. During the course, a parents committee was also elected to take part in planning the ongoing activities at the pre-school as well as in making decisions concerning organisation and content.

In the pre-schools, emphasis was placed on creating a bond with each of the parents, and on reporting to them about what was taking place in the pre-school in general and their children's development in particular. In addition to the initial preparatory course, the parents were invited to monthly group meetings, under the guidance of the programme coordinator, to discuss organisational matters, to expand their knowledge on topics relevant to their children's education (such as hygiene, proper nutrition, violence by children, fears), and to provide them with additional parenting and educating skills.

To sum up: for the children the pre-schools served as an intermediate framework – between the family day care centre and the kindergarten – designed to prepare them gradually for a smooth integration into the wider formal educational system. Thus, the programme was aimed at solving one of the most difficult problems encountered at the early stages of identifying the community's needs: the gaps between the children from Morasha and those from the more affluent neighbourhoods of Ramat HaSharon. These gaps were most glaringly evident when integrated elementary schools were opened in Ramat HaSharon. The pre-schools, filling voids, bridging gaps, and even at this early stage in their lives, exposing children to encounters with children from other neighbourhoods, naturally also served as an integrated framework for their parents. The programme therefore served to considerably moderate the prejudices and apprehensions that assailed both populations in their encounter in the formal system of education.

On the basis of the rationale underlying the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, the pre-schools also served as a framework for the re-education of the children's socialisation agents – the parents, para-professional care givers and kindergarten teachers – as educators on the one hand, and as agents of change within the entire community, on the other hand.

A key emphasis was placed on making parents more aware of the importance of their children's education and the quality of that education, also – and perhaps mainly – during the early years of their lives. An additional emphasis was placed on the central importance of parents' involvement, their responsibility, and the cooperation between them and the kindergarten teachers – so that they might learn from one another and together find ways to satisfy the children's needs.

The programmes enumerated above – training courses for para-professional counsellors and care givers, the EMRA home visiting programme, the family day care centres (for children aged zero to two years) and the pre-schools (for children aged two years six months to three years six months) – were the main focus of the Project's activities, and its principal vehicles for nurturing and empowering the community.

All of the programmes were implemented with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the assistance of governmental and municipal agencies in Israel.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that participation in all of the programmes involved some payment. The participants were deliberately charged a nominal fee, for educative purposes only. As low as the fees collected were, they did require the participants to make a positive commitment, and to come to the programmes, not as recipients of charity, but as people who, of their own initiative, were joining in the effort to do something for themselves, for their children and for the good of the entire community.

**Other programmes**

In addition to the four principal programmes described above, the project initiated and ran many diverse activities. Some of these were one off activities, others were ongoing, but they were all experiments and experiences. I will discuss a few of them briefly.

**The *Aleh* Centre (Early Childhood Enrichment)**[5]

The *Aleh* Centre was designed as an enriching environment for children (aged zero to three) and their parents, with a stress on the significance of education in the early years of children's lives.

This overall objective was translated into several aims, as follows:

- to improve and strengthen the relationships between parents and children;
- to provide the parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to cope effectively with the task of caring for their children, and enriching their emotional, cognitive and social worlds;
- to encourage parents to recognise the importance of their involvement in all aspects of their children's development;
- to provide counselling and guidance to the parents;
- to diagnose special problems and needs and, when necessary, to refer parents to therapeutic services in the community and elsewhere;
- to create an intimate and supportive atmosphere, in which the parents could meet and discuss among themselves their problems and experiences in rearing their children.

For the children, the *Aleh* centre offered stimulating activities, including a library and a play and game corner. The centre was open five times a week: three mornings –

including one for a game building workshop – and two afternoons. In addition to the current activities at the *Aleh* centre, the parents were invited to lectures and meetings, to acquire greater knowledge on topics related to early childhood development, and to group discussions of relevant problems.

The task of running the centre was assigned to para-professional counsellors from the staff of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, under the guidance and supervision of a social worker who coordinated, and was responsible for, the entire programme. Activity in the *Aleh* centre was mainly on the community level, and was in the nature of a preventive intervention programme. It was open to anyone in the community who wished to attend, occasionally or on a regular basis. It was interesting to find that many of the parents (in particular the mothers) who had the experience of supervised learning at the *Aleh* Centre were more willing to participate in other programmes that were more individual in nature (such as the EMRA home visiting programme). Moreover, although the *Aleh* Centre was a community type of activity, efforts were invested trying to introduce more personal elements. This mainly took the form of giving individual attention to mothers and children, focusing on their specific needs both inside and outside of the Centre's activities. In this regard, an attempt was also made to locate additional families in need of the Centre's services. This task was carried out by the para-professional counsellors, in an unceasing process of getting to know the community and its needs.

At the same time, special attention was also devoted to identifying those women who regularly attended the *Aleh* Centre for a long period, in an effort to encourage them to switch roles, that is, to change over from being at the receiving end of help to providing help for others, and to recruit them to work for the good of the Centre.

In other words, the strategy of the *Aleh* Centre was to act on a community and preventive level, as well as a personal level and then to combine the two: caring for the community by enlisting individuals from within the community to work in a supportive and helping capacity.

**Parent-run kindergartens**

The Parent-run Kindergarten Programme was designed to meet the needs of parents of small children who were interested in an enriching educational and care giving facility for them. However, these families were not entitled to financial support because the mothers did not work outside the home, or they did not meet the conditions for acceptance in regular day care centres or the family day care centres. In most cases, these mothers had no profession and had chosen to remain at home while their children were still infants. This was partly because they wanted to save the fees they would have to spend for day care and partly because they did not feel that such young children really needed to be in an educational framework. These families usually lived on the father's earnings, often with help from grandparents or support from the Ministry of Labour and Welfare. Some of the mothers also supplemented the family income by working as domestic help.



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To provide children from these families with an enriching educational and care giving context – at a very low cost – as well as to try in this way to encourage their mothers to go out of the home to study or acquire a profession, the Parent-run Kindergarten Programme was set up. As its name suggests, it was an educational setting for children, under the responsibility and management of the parents, with the support, assistance and guidance of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project.

In order to cut down on expenses (purchasing a building and equipment), the programme was operated in a kindergarten school belonging to the Local Council, which was free during the morning hours.

A para-professional counsellor was chosen to help the parents formulate and operate the programme, and she was assisted throughout by the programme coordinator from the project staff. To meld the parents into a cohesive group and to provide initial guidance, two meetings were held with the parents. These meetings were devoted to organising the kindergarten, setting up its daily schedule, and providing the parents with the basic knowledge and tools necessary to engage in educational work with toddlers (one to two years).

The Parent-run Kindergarten was in operation during the morning hours (8:00 to 12:30) and 12 children were enrolled in it. Each day, according to a pre-arranged schedule, one of the mothers joined the para-professional counsellor, and together they ran that day's activity.

The parents, in cooperation with the counsellor and the programme coordinator, were full partners in deciding on the curriculum, and in organising and operating the kindergarten. In this way, the programme was also a context of enrichment and learning for the parents themselves.

**Creativity workshops in community clubs**[7]

The creativity workshops in community clubs were among the first activities conducted by the Early Childhood and Family Education Project[7] with the assistance of para-professional counsellors from the project staff.

In the spirit of the project's rationale, as well as in the search for ways to reach out to the community and its parents and children, the creativity workshop programme was intended to provide an informal educational enrichment setting. Its activities encompassed all those involved in the educational process: children, parents, and kindergarten teachers and their assistants.

The programme was scheduled for two afternoon sessions per week. The decision to have para-professional counsellors from within the community run the programme and to offer it to children in kindergartens (aged three to six years) and their socialisation agents – parents and kindergarten teachers and their assistants – was based on the need to solve several problems and meet certain needs for which no suitable and complete solution existed in the formal educational system.[7]

The operational goals of the programme as set out below thus reflect its overall objectives as an enriching and supplementary framework for several target populations.

**For the kindergarten children** the programme's goal was to provide a framework, tools and guidance to enrich their creative world by offering them a number of opportunities for using and developing their creativity: clay modelling, collage, painting and drawing, planning and building games and toys.

In many cases, the children had already engaged in creative activity in the kindergarten. However, for most of them this experience was insufficient, since their homes were ill-equipped to provide the stimulation necessary. In some cases, parents did not know what the child's needs were, nor how to satisfy them outside the formal educational framework. Some parents devoted too little attention to that, or were too preoccupied with the difficult problems of their day to day life and thus lacked the physical and emotional resources to nurture their families.

The workshops provided a supplementary facility in which the children could express their creativity, while at the same time providing them another experience, no less important than the first – the chance to share the experience of learning and creativity together with their parents, who came to the workshop with their children and participated actively in it.

**For the parents** the programme had several goals. The main one was to increase their interest and involvement in their children's education. Towards this end, the workshops were operated as a learning and enrichment facility for the parents, no less than for the children. The workshops provided an opportunity for the para-professional counsellors to meet the parents. During the activities, they could both impart knowledge and skills and enhance parent's awareness of their children's needs. They could also stress the importance of the parent's active involvement in their children's education within the formal system of education and the family unit.

In this way, the programme tried to fill voids caused by a lack of knowledge and skills, as well as by apathy and incompetence. But it aspired to more than that: it tried to change the parents' image of themselves as people who have nothing to give their children and who therefore leave the responsibility for their education squarely in the lap of the establishment.

Moreover, due to the special way the programme was organised and run, the meeting between the parents and the kindergarten teachers was an intimate one. This helped to deepen the ties between them and served as the basis for a candid dialogue concerning their children's education, needs, problems and development.

**For the kindergarten teachers** – most of whom did not come from the community – the creativity workshops were the only setting in which they could meet intimately with the parents and, through them, become better acquainted with the community and its needs, and with the various activities being conducted in it.

By means of this programme, we wanted to make the pre-school teachers aware of the need for cooperation with the parents, and to encourage them to show more openness and attentiveness: after all, the parents know their children better than anyone else. Moreover, without detracting from the value of their pedagogical education, we felt that the pre-school teachers needed to update their knowledge and their approach through first hand acquaintance with the particular community of Morasha, its characteristics and needs.

Also included in the programme's target population were the assistants to the pre-school teachers. The majority came from within the community, and they fulfilled mainly menial tasks in the pre-school. Although they spent their time in the pre-school caring for the children and, like any other adult, served as a role model, they were not treated as if their function called for any knowledge or skills. Consequently, no adequate provision existed for training them and providing them with the basic tools for educational work with children. For most of them, the workshops were their first opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills in child care and education, and to understand the world of children. This fact took on great importance on several levels.

On the personal level, the programme helped the assistant pre-school teachers to improve their self-image and encouraged them to continue learning and thinking about the possibilities for advancement in their field – as para-professionals.

On the educational level, the enrichment of the assistant teachers had an empowering effect on the children themselves. For no matter what role they fulfilled in the pre-school, these women were socialisation agents for the children.

The improved self-image and higher quality work of the assistant teachers naturally had a positive effect on the community level. And finally, the fact that the creativity workshops were operated in the community clubs also provided a vehicle to encourage and reinforce empowering activity in the life of the community.

**The Listening Corner**

The Listening Corner programme was held in the Da'at public library, in the centre of Morasha, following a request made by the directors of the library and the local council to the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, asking it to cooperate in introducing an enrichment programme for children's games and literature.

The programme was designed for two to six year old children who came to the Listening Corner alone, with their parents, or with their older siblings. A separate room at the entrance to the library was assigned to the programme, and the necessary materials and equipment – educational games, books, tapes, cassettes, and so on – was purchased.

The Listening Corner was open three afternoons a week for joint activities with children, parents and older siblings, and one morning a week for prearranged visits by groups of children from the regular day care centres, from the family day care centres

and from the nearby kindergartens. In addition, on one evening a week a group instruction session for parents was conducted in the Listening Corner.

The programme operated as an integral part of the library, providing an additional service available for all parents and children who happened to come along. It was run by three para-professional counsellors, who had previously attended workshops in stories, songs and games for children. In the actual implementation of the programme, the counsellors had the task of introducing the Listening Corner to those who attended it, assisting with personal and group direction, and when necessary, providing a helping hand and an attentive ear for children and their parents, with a stress on fostering patterns of behaviour and attitudes appropriate to the setting and the atmosphere.

The first aim of the programme was to provide a quiet corner at the library where children could play and read, and at the same time to expose them to new books and games in a supervised manner. The activity in the Listening Corner was also intended to enhance the parents' awareness of the importance of playing, reading and listening in the development of young children, and to encourage the use of the library by both children and parents. Moreover, the programme provided older siblings with special guidance about the purpose and mode of playing with their younger brothers and sisters, and helped create better interaction between them in the Listening Corner and in the family home.

In addition, the Listening Corner programme provided a good opportunity for cooperation between the Early Childhood and Family Education Project and a socio-educational institution in the community – one of the project's broader aims. It was also an empowering factor for the para-professional counsellors, providing them with ample scope for initiative, and for personal and professional responsibility.

**A play room as a stimulation centre**

In addition to its work on the *Mech* Centre and the Listening Corner programme, the Early Childhood and Family Education Project also complied with a request from the Ramat HaSharon community centres network to operate a play centre for toddlers and young children in Morasha. The programme was run by two para-professional counsellors, both of them women from Morasha, with the help and guidance of the project's professional staff.

The play centre was open once a week for mothers and their children aged from one to six years. In addition, it was open for children from four to six years who came there without their parents. For these older children, a special activity corner was set up for individual and group work – under the guidance of the counsellors. Once every two weeks, a parents group discussion session was held at the play centre, with the guidance of a professional.

All of the programmes presented above are a representative sample of the activities of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project within disadvantaged

communities. Each and every one of these activities was a landmark in the task of translating principles, rationale and objectives into a comprehensive intervention programme.

Furthermore, many of the programmes operated by the project were not included in the original project proposal, but came into being in the course of its work, in the wake of new needs that presented themselves and in response to requests made by members of the community, directly or indirectly. By means of a varied basket of activities, we tried to expand and reinforce the channels of communication between the project and the children and parents in the community, in order to bring about a process of real and lasting change. Towards this end, we aspired to tap the community's unrealised potential, and to provide the necessary assistance to channel that potential into a viable process of growth and progress. The residents of the community joined in that process gradually – only a few responded with enthusiasm at first. Many more reacted to the project's various programmes with scepticism and reservation, even when they agreed to try to take part in them; they sometimes acted as if they were doing so under duress.

Reactions like these, or others even more antagonistic, in no way lessened the efforts of the project staff. Still, there were many doubts and questions we had to confront again and again: how to help the community without shaking its foundations? How to effect change and at the same time maintain the right balance between traditional lifestyles and modern Western norms? How to create an empowering synthesis between sociological and psychological theories on the one hand and the residents' perceptions of their own needs on the other?

We never came up with definitive answers to all these queries, nor did we find a safe path, free of obstacles and mistakes. However, by constantly grappling with these issues, the project gained conceptual and practical flexibility and a large degree of protection against ideological fossilisation.

A description of the project's programmes can convey many of its major components. But it does not authentically and fully portray the quintessence of its character and development. The project's unique qualities lay in the fact that it spearheaded a process of change in the community, in and of itself, and through the people who grew in it and ran its activities.

To put it differently, when things go as they should, programmes develop. But when things go really well, people develop.

NOTES ON CHAPTER SIX

1. For a comprehensive discussion of the aims of the training programme, the principles underlying its planning, its structure and content, its organisation and modes of operation, see the booklet *Training of Para-professional Early Childhood Counsellors and Care givers*, The Early Childhood Association, Sharon Region, sponsored by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1990.

2. The special role of the para-professionals in the project's team and the process of their development within the project are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

3. Other people, such as directors of day care centres and nursery schools, also helped in locating and referring families to EMRA. In addition, after the programme became well known in the community, many mothers found their way to the project on their own and asked to be included in the EMRA programme.

4. Children from prosperous neighbourhoods in the western part of Ramat HaSharon also were enrolled in the family day care centres run in the homes of para-professional care givers in Morasha. In this way, the programme was also an integrative setting, in the full sense of the word, for parents and children, on both the social and the educational level.

5. The *Aleh* Centre began its operation early in 1982 with financing from Project Renewal, under the responsibility of the Social Services Bureau of the Ramat HaSharon Local Council. About three years after the establishment of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project (when Project Renewal was in the process of completing its work in Morasha), it was given the responsibility for continuing the Centre's activity. In Morasha, the *Aleh* Centre operated in the Kedmah Sick Fund clinic.

6. Many mothers came to the *Aleh* Centre during and after their participation in the EMRA programme.

7. The community clubs were actually two shelters that had been renovated and re-equipped at the initiative of two Morasha women. In the afternoons, they were centres of social and community activity for youngsters and adults in the neighbourhood. These two women, who began their community involvement through the Morasha Council (see Chapter 2), were members of the Early Childhood Association board, representing the residents of Morasha. They suggested the creativity workshops be set up in the community clubs they were managing. For the project, this was an apt solution, while for them, it was an opportunity to expand the number of people attending these community clubs and another means of enhancing their function in the fabric of community life.

8. The programme was run by the Early Childhood and Family Education Project for one school year. Then, the responsibility for running it was transferred to the community clubs, under the supervision and with the assistance of the Section for Community Work of the Ramat HaSharon Local Council.

9. The creativity workshops were set up prior to the pre-school programme, which in fact combined the basic components (enrichment of children and socialisation agents together) in one programme.

Part three

# Not as a legend

*The purpose of our studies is life, not the academy.*

(Seneca)

Chapter Seven

## To sing in a chorus, to be in an orchestra

When I come to describe everything that happened in the Early Childhood and Family Education Project – that started with people, continued with them and aimed at them – I must leave aside the chronology and the tendency to connect the separate parts into a story of linear development.

I must go back to the details to the stories within the story of a project that was a mirror image of a process taking place in the community, its successes and failures. I must go back to the project's professional staff, taking shape and doing its work; back to the process of training and empowering the para-professional counsellors, as a model of the entire project's work, to the process of nurturing the para-professional care givers and to the nature of our joint work. I must touch on the relationships within the project between the professional staff and the para-professionals, and the interaction between them. I must also return to the community, as it was then and as it is now.

I must re-examine the structural and organisational aspects and the complex system of communications between the project and its closer and more distant environment, which are also an integral part of its development. I must look again at the story of the project's dissemination, at its struggle to do things, and at its battle to survive as time was running out and the pendulum constantly swung between vision and reality, between the burden of expectations and the evaluation of results, between subjective criteria and objective yardsticks.

And within all of these the story of building and managing the project: with my bare hands and sometimes with much gnashing of teeth. Eight years on the very fine line between the public domain and the private domain. In a plot whose characters are all anti heroes, that came to life, not as a legend, but on the stage of reality, where the banal and the obvious lurked at every corner wearing a cynical smile.

A project is not created instantaneously, neither inwardly nor outwardly. For more than anything else, a project is a process. It is a live story in instalments, and its time, place, and characters record it chapter after chapter, not necessarily according to a predictable and chronological order.

And such was the Early Childhood and Family Education Project as again and again it shaped people and people gave it its shape: when a sculptor carves in stone, there are moments when it is difficult to know which is the creator and which the creation.

The inner life of the project took place in the large prefab on Hashmonaim street in Morasha. All of the people in the project – the professional staff, the para-professional staff and I – came there daily, different organs together forming a living and developing body.

This creation started with the first professional on the project, an educational coordinator who was gradually joined by other professionals as it grew in response to the community's needs.

Professional staff had many functions, each in his or her sphere of work and responsibility, ranging from the formulation of new educational and social programmes, through the adaptation of existing programmes to the specific needs of the project's target population, to all the activities connected with the implementation of the programmes, as well as their supervision, improvement and perfection. This was all done in a constant process of learning through doing, getting feedback, identifying new needs, searching for ways to meet these needs, going from the project offices out into the field and back again.

However, by enumerating the formal functions of the project's professionals, we have not said anything about them as a team, as an inseparable part of a developing dynamic, nor have we said anything about their role in this dynamic.

One should always remember that the project's uniqueness lay in its way of doing things in a process of building, crystallising and growing within the project, not according to preset models and patterns. In many senses, the project was a melting pot, and all those in it underwent a form of transformation.

The task of recruiting professionals to work on the project and forging them into a cohesive team was not a simple one, nor was it free of problems and crises. First, there was the difficulty dictated by the nature of the project itself as a framework limited in time and resources. All those joining the project knew it was a temporary workplace, dependent on contributions that were earmarked, first and foremost, for the community and its welfare, not for the welfare of the project staff. Moreover, a job at the project entailed hard work, often at odd hours, in a structure that offered no professional promotion track, no scale of grades, nor any other such benefits. As the director of the project, and the one who had to hire the staff and guide them throughout the life of the project, I had to be the first to understand this built-in difficulty and to try to cope with it.

In place of the accepted perquisites held out in Israel by any desirable workplace, I offered the project's special attractions as I saw them the chance to belong to something new, a framework that we could shape ourselves, an opportunity to do things and make an impact, to try new things, to plan and to implement. All of these were embodied in a project that provided professional challenges and ample scope for developing new ideas, for expressing creativity and imagination, and showing initiative, in a framework which was not structured and rigid, but innovative and flexible. The next stage – melding people into a team – was no less difficult than the previous one. It meant repeatedly explaining the norms in a project supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, learning together how to write and submit workplans and progress reports, and understanding the meaning and value of evaluation as an inseparable part of the project's work, as a tool for examining the quality of our work, as a regular procedure that calls for candid and close cooperation with the evaluator.

In order to become a cohesive team, all of the professionals had to know the nature of their job and the area of their responsibility, as well as their role within the entire group, both when things were going smoothly and when under pressure. We had to learn how we, as a chorus, could appear in harmony, united and all playing the same tune, inside the community on one hand, and outside to institutions and established services on the other. This was of immense importance throughout all the stages of the project's development, both when we were still working as if in a vacuum, quite anonymous to the community and the municipal and governmental bodies active in it and more so when the project took on momentum and became a known entity with a presence. For success, in most cases, did not arrive alone. It was often accompanied by all manner of narrow mindedness that regarded the project as a rival to be feared. This attitude led to attempts to hinder the work of the staff, and sometimes to a refusal to cooperate.

Confronting difficulties – as with confronting successes – always served to remind me of the importance of making the staff a cohesive unit, dedicated to achieving the goals of the project and always bearing in mind its original and sole objective, the community of Morasha. I had to re-emphasise the seemingly self evident that the project was not set up for the staff, but rather that the staff was working for the sake of the project. For the better the work of the project went, the stronger the internal dynamics of work and development became, and the greater the danger of losing sight of its purpose.

About one year after the Early Childhood and Family Education Project was established, when the first training course for para-professionals was completed, several graduates of the course joined the project's staff, as para-professional counsellors running the EMIRA home visiting programme. Their employment in the early stages of the project turned out to be one of the most important elements in our development, within both the project and the community.

The fact that these women – who came from the community and had been trained by the project to work in the community – joined the staff naturally affected first and foremost the dynamics within the project. From a rather homogeneous and limited staff of professionals, the project now expanded and became heterogeneous.

Furthermore, these para-professional counsellors actually brought the community into the project. Thus, through a process of working and learning, the project was directed at two target populations: the entire community of Morasha, and the group of counsellors who had joined the project staff. We regarded this latter population not only as a group trained by the project to carry out specific tasks but, beyond that, as a group that must be nurtured within the project and in its work with the community. In this way its members could become in actual practice the pathfinders of the process of change, and thus, genuine agents of change and role models within the community.

The search for, and application of, ways and means to nurture, enrich and empower the project's para-professional staff, became a unique working model in itself, a project within a project.

The first means for strengthening and empowering the para-professional counsellors were the educational and social programmes that project brought to the community.

As the project's activity broadened, the EMRA Programme was joined by many others,[3] both in response to needs and as a product of the staff's initiatives. Most of these programmes were run by the para-professional counsellors under the guidance of the professional staff. For the counsellors they all served as avenues of action, learning, and personal and group development, through their empowering work with scores of parents and children in the community.

For these Morasha women, their work on the project's programmes was a real turnabout. For most of them, it was the first time they had left their homes to share with their spouses the earning of the family livelihood; it was a real change in their status and their role in the home. For all of these women, their training, and even more their actual work, meant coping with a new world of knowledge and skills, coupled with an opportunity to realise their own abilities, which until then had been a latent and untapped potential.

And above all, they were exposed to a unique experience: from being helped themselves they were helping others; from being on the receiving end of counselling, they were counselling others. And this was happening within their very own community. In other words, as they helped advance the goals of the project on the community level, these counsellors were themselves on a path of development.

Simultaneously, in a dynamic that took on momentum through a lengthy and circuitous process, the para-professional counsellors were nurtured and empowered within the project itself as a distinct target population.

Throughout, I knew this was an appropriate challenge for the project, a vital means for achieving its aims. I never retreated from it even when I was confronted by disagreement and friction from within and without, even when I was forced time and again to mobilise the professional staff to support me in this challenge, and not even when I found myself caught in the middle, between the professional staff and the para-professional staff. For even in difficult moments of indecision and uncertainty about the approach to be adopted or the decisions to be taken and implemented, I intuitively knew that the power and ability to act given to me as director of the project did not belong to me, that I had to pass them on to the para-professional counsellors and, through them, to the community as a whole.

It was this recognition that dictated an open door and attentive ear management policy. It also led to the decision to invite the para-professional counsellors as equal partners to the meetings held between the project staff and representatives of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, of various institutions, of the Dutch Jewish community and of parents who participated in the project's programmes.

To strengthen their status as individuals and as a group, as well as to further their development, the para-professional counsellors were able to elect representatives to a

workers' committee to represent their interests and those of the professional staff to the board of the Early Childhood Association. A workers' committee would seem to be superfluous in a project which is not an establishment type body by its nature and which is limited in duration. However, the election of a workers' committee was yet another means of nurturing the counsellors and reinforcing their independence, as individuals and as representatives of the community. Moreover, since the project was a short term place of employment, we tried in this way and in others to prepare them for jobs in other workplaces. For example, we provided them with relevant information – grades and duties, conditions of employment, levels of income, and so on – and some real experience of the 'rules of the game' in effect in other places, so that when the time came they could establish their status and demand their rights. In addition, the counsellors were granted a privilege that was not open to the professional staff: as representatives of the community, they were allowed to propose their candidacy for election as members of the Association board.

Step by step, the activity of the project in the community broadened and deepened, striving to reach further and deeper. And, at the same time, its work with the para-professional counsellors was intensified. None of this was done according to a preset plan with well known stages, but rather by listening attentively to the needs presented through the process, and so identifying the steps required to move it forward. Thus, in consultation with the professional staff, I decided to add a para-professional counsellor to the admissions committee of the para-professional training course, to register the candidates and to provide her opinions of their suitability for training. In addition, the staff and I decided to include the para-professional counsellors in the training programme itself, as members of the teaching staff.

This element, which had not been part of the original model of the training programme, turned out to be one of its most salient and important features, one that left its imprint on both the trainees and the counsellors. By taking an active part in training other women from the community, the para-professional counsellors had the opportunity to utilise their experience and the lessons they had learned by working with parents and children. For them, it was an opportunity to continue developing, to cope with new challenges (giving lectures, meeting for talks with the trainees, providing counselling and guidance in observations and practical work, and conducting a follow-up of the progress of the trainees in these situations).

Thanks to the practical experience they had gained by working in the field, the counsellors were able to give the women in the training course unique assistance and firsthand information. And finally, the fact that the veteran para-professional workers and the trainees who would join them in the future were able to meet and become acquainted in the course, served as an excellent basis for future contacts between them, both on the personal level and the community level.

As in every real process of growth, a breakthrough entails the preparation of the next step upward. This was also true in the process of empowering the para-professional counsellors. However, to make their continued growth possible, at each stage we had to create the next rung on the ladder.

The urgency of this need was particularly striking among the graduates of the first training programme for para-professional counsellors, after about three years of work on the project's activities in general and in the EMIRA Programme in particular. Many of them, particularly those who were always on the 'front line' in their work with the community, began to exhibit signs of fatigue and burnout. In my conversations with them, along with their strong, almost desperate, desire to keep progressing, they expressed their fear that they might be stagnating.

Again we, the professional staff and I, sat together to search for ways, to find answers. We finally came up with a two pronged programme: first, to search for frameworks outside the project to provide enrichment and advanced in-service training for para-professional counsellors; and second, to create a promotion track for counsellors within the project, while introducing activities that would present new challenges to the entire staff of counsellors.

Thus, para-professional staff of the project enrolled in a one year course in social psychology, given once weekly at the Open University. This was followed by a one year course run on the subject of early childhood development in the Sharon region by the Association of Community Centres.

In our drive to move outward, beyond the boundaries of Morasha and the internal activity of the project, we also arranged one day excursions for educational and social purposes to other projects in the country operating with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. These were in Sderot (in the southern part of the country) and Acre (in the north).

In response to a request by several counsellors who were interested in counselling parents of exceptional children and in working with the children themselves, the entire project had to cope with new challenges. On the one hand, we invested enormous efforts in negotiating with professional and care giving institutions, to convince them to accept the para-professional counsellors onto a special training course in this field; while on the other, we had to cope with the needs of a new target population: exceptional children aged zero to three, and their parents.

Thus, in response to the needs of the para-professional counsellors to develop, with the aim of providing them with the greatest amount of stimulation and challenges for their personal and professional advancement, and in order to make them effective guides in the community, the project expanded their range of activities.

Equipped with large cloth bags bearing the name 'Van Leer', and already well known to all, the counsellors carried on with their campaign of opening doors in the community, reaching out to more and more mothers and children.

And as the project broke fresh ground, we returned to its first jumping off place together with the counsellors, to the EMIRA Programme. But this time with their full cooperation in determining all the components of the programme. The counsellors selected from among themselves a group of representatives so, before sitting with the

programme coordinator, these representatives had to attend a special in-service training course to learn to write workplans (setting out goals and modes of operation, translating needs into applicable work methods, defining target populations, organising a schedule, and so on).

In thus reformulating the EMRA Programme on the basis of the evaluation activity, the counsellors' reports from the field and on the lessons learned by the professional staff, we decided to make it more flexible; more responsive to the needs of the families and their progress. The original pattern of a weekly one hour visit throughout a year, was replaced with three modes of counselling lasting for three months, for six months, or for an entire year. Each visit lasted half an hour.

In order to follow up the work done with each family methodically, we formulated, together with the counsellors, a special report form which was in the nature of a summary and an opinion. In this the counsellors recorded their activities with the mothers and children, and their specific recommendations regarding the period of guidance required by each family.

We also decided to introduce young mothers with their first child – not necessarily families in distress – into the EMRA Programme, in order to guide them in their early days as mothers. In this way, the programme's target population was expanded and with it, the counsellor's sphere of work.

At the same time, we built the counsellors promotion path into the project. Unlike the patterns typical of organisations employing para-professional workers, the promotion path constructed in the project incorporated grades, wage components and appointments to positions usually given to professionals. This carried the risk of creating competitiveness and imbalance within the group of counsellors. However, there were two good reasons for taking it. First, there was the fear that the project might lose the entire group of counsellors if nothing was done to prevent their burnout and to enable their continued advancement. Second, there was a need to recognise their ability to undertake more arduous tasks and shoulder the responsibility for their successful implementation.

The project translated this goal into action first by creating new jobs for the para-professional counsellors: as deputy coordinator of the EMRA Programme, as deputy coordinator of the Family Day Care Centre Programme, and as organisational assistants. We formulated job descriptions, and asked the entire staff of counsellors for their recommendations and opinions about the suitability of those counsellors who applied for the positions. As was to be expected, problems arose among the counsellors themselves, who were uncertain as to which of them were suitable for the proposed jobs, and who should finally be selected. More serious difficulties arose among the members of the professional staff who were forced to forego several positions and to delegate authority to the counsellors.

Together, we soon realised that this new division of positions was both necessary and correct. The professional staff of the project was overworked and it was impossible to

reinforce their numbers within the framework of the original workplan and budget proposal." The decision to appoint counsellors as deputies and organisational assistants was, therefore, the right step at the right time.

Once a consensus was reached on the issue in principle, disputes arose over its implications. The most acute centred on the question of inviting the new appointees to the meetings of the professional staff. On the one hand, we felt that this could further heighten the competitive elements that manifested themselves among the counsellors. On the other, the professional staff feared that the presence of the counsellors at these meetings might interfere with the closed nature of the discussions. These were semi-closed forums at which problems and topics of a confidential nature were brought up – intimate family problems, the diagnosis of exceptionality, referrals for therapy, and so on.

Finally, as in many other instances, I was the one who had to resolve the problem. Despite the apprehensions, and based only on the issue itself, I decided that the new appointees would be full participants in the staff discussions.

Another question came up at the same time: was it correct to allow deputy coordinators and organisational assistants to represent the project in outside settings?" At first, both the members of the professional staff and the counsellors objected to this idea, in each case due to qualms about the possibility of failure. Again there was an internal struggle, until we finally decided to invest the required efforts in this sphere as well, by enabling the para-professional counsellors to grow into their new jobs and fulfil them in the best way that they could.

Moreover, we hoped in this way to endow the counsellors with the authority and the power, first and foremost as representatives of the community, to meet with professionals and officials in institutions, to participate with them in decision making meetings and discussions, to express their opinions without fear, to take an active role, and to represent, through their approach and attitudes, the processes occurring within the community.

This decision was translated into action by gradually exposing the counsellors, with constant guidance and supervision from the coordinators, to officials in various agencies and institutions, and to the patterns of communication with them. This was in the name of the project and on its behalf. Step by step, the counsellors learned the secrets of the profession, and demonstrated their ability to faithfully represent the project and its objectives.

However, the more apparent their success became, the more numerous were those who tried to disavow it and to caution me against this trend. Many professionals from those agencies and institutions with whom we had contacts in our work constantly warned me not to bestow power and authority on para-professionals. All the theories claim it is a mistake, they told me, and experience in the field proves them right, they reiterated; so take care they reminded me lest this approach you have chosen turns out in the long run to be damaging to the project.

And at the very same time, those people who never stopped cautioning me, constantly queried me as to the secret of the project's success: "How does one reach hundreds of parents and children"; "How does one succeed in encompassing such a large population in such a short time?". Very few of them accepted my explanation that the very strategy they were warning me against was advancing the project, and with it the community.

The process of advancing the para-professional counsellors produced results on all the relevant levels: in the private lives of the counsellors, as women, wives and mothers; in the community, which had spawned these brave and determined women, who had invested their best efforts in their home neighbourhood; and in the project itself, which by tirelessly coping with problems and difficulties, had maintained its vitality and its immunity against the smug complacency of the "know it all". Among the para-professional counsellors there were those who, in their process of development, turned out to be a rich source of ideas and initiatives. For example, they suggested that, at the end of each year's activity, the project hold an annual conference of all the families participating in the EMRA Programme, parents as well as children. And once this proposal was approved, they undertook to plan, organise and implement it, and created a tradition: at each year end, a real happening.

The next proposal was not long in coming. Based on their work experience, the counsellors contended that more efforts and resources needed to be invested in order to galvanise the men in the community – the fathers – to greater involvement in child raising and to community life in general. They suggested that, in addition to all its other activities in this area, the project set up a facility for parents participating in the EMRA Programme that would offer lectures and other activities in the evenings when fathers had returned from work. Again, this was a programme that was not included in the original plan of the project, but one that grew out of its work, with the objective of doing everything possible to respond to the needs.

To prepare for this new framework, the para-professional counsellors went to the families. They asked the parents in which areas they wanted to expand their knowledge, and which were the most difficult problems they encountered both in family life, and in raising their children. Based on the feedback obtained, a sort of mini school for parenting was set up as part of the EMRA Programme. In this framework, lectures, group discussions, and various other activities were held once a month, with the participation of most of the families taking part in the EMRA Programme. Not only did it serve as a means for enriching and guiding mothers and fathers together, but it helped the families to become better acquainted, to become more aware that they belonged to an extended family: the EMRA family. This recognition was immensely helpful in combating prejudices and stigmas, and in breaking through the hard shell created by a sense of isolation and repressed feelings of guilt.

These meetings also were a natural vehicle through which the project could reach out to the community, drawing it closer, enlisting more residents into membership in the Early Childhood Association, and spotting candidates for the para-professional training courses.

So gradually, the community found its way, on its own, to the project. Moreover, the process in which the para-professional counsellors were empowered during which one of them, overcoming all hurdles, became a programme coordinator was the calling card of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project in other communities.' At this stage of the project's development, the para-professional counsellors were the pathfinders. They were the ones who explained the essence of the project's programmes to professionals in the new communities, and it was they who persuaded women from these communities to enrol in the first training courses which now formed part of the regional project. For they were, in the full sense of the word, role models and living proof of the project's success.

And yet there was never a moment or a stage in the process of empowering the counsellors that was not beset by difficulties, hesitations, internal friction and thorny problems. No miracles were at work here, but rather tireless efforts and ceaseless investments that often took their toll. For example, as a result of my decision to conduct an open door management policy for all members of the staff, and in particular for the para-professional counsellors, I often found myself spending long hours listening, counselling and advising, forced to postpone handling numerous matters until the evening hours, or during long nights of work at my home. To make matters worse, for the counsellors, I was first and foremost a child of the community, 'one of them'. Consequently, they felt it was easier and safer to turn to me, not only in professional matters, but also concerning personal problems, requests for help in applying to official agencies, in the wording of letters, and the like.

As much as I could, given that I knew so well the difficulties they were facing and the degree of determination and daring they needed to follow this new path, I listened and tried to help. But I very quickly realised that, for their own good, and for the sake of the project as a whole, I had to set some limits. Slowly, trying not to undermine the openness that had been created, I taught the para-professional staff not to expect immediate answers and gratification. When professional problems arose, I did my best to foster the procedure of referring them to the project's professional staff and board, to stop seeing me as the fount of all knowledge, to understand the administrative arrangements existing in the project, and its underlying principles and objectives.

In stages, I managed to distance them from the mentality of 'You owe me, I'm underprivileged: people like you have the responsibility to do things for me', and moved them towards presenting their point of view properly and justifying their requests without automatically resorting to emotional means. And in the course of the daily work, when so many counsellors began asking for leave during the holidays and the summer vacation, when their children were not at school or kindergarten, I did my best to help them. But at the same time I sat with the project's professional staff to organise a special workshop for them on the topic 'We as working mothers'. Its aim was to show the counsellors that, in their struggle to go out to work and be good mothers and model housewives, they were not alone. In this struggle, they were joining women all over the world. We also wanted to teach them that this was not an insurmountable challenge, that there are tools and ways to cope with it successfully.

that priorities and habits can be changed without detriment to the really important things in life.

At the same time, with the board's approval, I circulated a vacation schedule for the project and also a list of work regulations. To these I added memoranda whenever it became necessary. Gradually, they produced results: the personal requests decreased in number and the formal demands that previously seemed so rigid were now viewed by all the members of the project as valuable aids.

And as the para-professional counsellors became more integrated into the project and accustomed to its procedures, we were more meticulous about preserving the project's basic orientation and primary emphasis: the community.

It is important to remember that, in their work within the EMRA Programme, the para-professional counsellors maintained a direct, continuous and intimate contact with many families. And as their involvement grew, more thought was paid to the nature of their relations with the population. In a small community, where the people all know one another, in which news and rumours travel swiftly, a great deal of caution and discretion is necessary. Therefore, in addition to the initial training and ongoing guidance provided to the counsellors, we also arranged a special workshop for them dealing with their relationships with the community.

Particular stress was placed on ways of coping with the difficult problems the counsellors encountered in their work, on their duty to avoid betraying the trust placed in them, on the need to maintain confidentiality and, above all, to respect the people they were counselling. On the professional level, the aim of the workshop was to deepen the counsellor's knowledge in relation to collecting relevant information, sifting the wheat from the chaff, and reporting on their activities in the proper ways.

In addition, the workshops attempted to help the counsellors overcome their difficulties in the process of separation from the families in their care. They also encouraged them to try to empower these mothers outside of the EMRA Programme by recommending that they join in other activities in the community and the project, by telling them about the training courses for para-professionals, and by sharing with them their experience as counsellors.

In this workshop and others, as well as in many talks and activities with the para-professional counsellors, we continued trying to nurture and empower them, while doing our utmost to avoid creating barriers between them and their 'clients', to prevent the formation of an elite group within the community.

To avoid losing touch with what was happening in the field, to preserve the distinction between enrichment and care giving, to make sure the counsellors did not exceed the bounds of their function and if they did, to intervene in the process and stop it in time, we developed various ways and methods in the project. First of all, every counsellor received personal, continuous supervision from the EMRA Programme coordinator, as part of which they were required to submit a detailed weekly report on their work with the families in their care. From time to time, the

coordinator accompanied the counsellors on their visits to the families, and closely observed their work and their relationships with the mothers and children. In addition, we occasionally held meetings with the parents themselves in the evenings, at the project offices, to hear directly from them their impressions of the counsellors' work with them and their evaluation of its progress.

There were very few cases in which exceptional problems were detected in the home visiting process. Moreover, the counsellors succeeded in locating many families in need of professional help, whose problems and needs were revealed for the first time when they consented to talk about them with women from the community, with the para-professional counsellors.

Nevertheless, despite the efforts we invested in various and numerous ways, we never succeeded in totally preventing instances of jealousy and resentment within the community towards the counsellors. This is a vexatious issue, and perhaps one that cannot be prevented or resolved. After all, it is one that involves human beings who are very well aware of whether they are receiving support or providing it.

For those who were the first to break out of the vicious circle of dependency – the counsellors who were part of the project and its development – the project was not only a place of growth, but also an alarm clock awakening them to the hard facts of real life. Again and again, we explained to them that the more successful they were, the longer the road they still had to travel, the more they had to study and learn in order to obtain recognised certification. We gave them support but, at the same time, constantly reminded them that the project would not always be there to protect them, to lead them, to open doors for them. While we continued to encourage and cheer them on, we also fulfilled a less pleasant task. We did our best to prevent the counsellors from entertaining any illusions, we explained the rules of the game in effect outside the project, we urged them to view the project and their success in it as a springboard, and by no means as a safe haven.

In retrospect, the emphasis was naturally placed on getting the community – and those who grew within it – to be self-reliant with the help of the project, and as part of it. Despite this fact, or perhaps because of it, the members of the project's professional staff played a decisive role in the process. They were required to cope daily with new challenges, with heavy demands on both the professional and the human levels. They had to demonstrate their willingness to do their work and their ability to gain satisfaction from it, although it was done behind the scenes and was entirely dedicated to the empowerment and welfare of others. Their most trying times occurred in empowering the para-professional counsellors. In this process, which was a microcosm of the entire project, the members of the professional staff not only had to plan programmes but they also had to implement them within the project itself; delegating authority; guiding and teaching; avoiding imposing attitudes; avoiding creating gaps within the expanded staff or between an elite group and a supported group; establishing a relationship based on mutual understanding and respect. And they had to understand that, in the final analysis, the project actually 'belongs' to the counsellors who bring it to the community, returning with reactions and lessons which provide material for the work of the professional staff.

As I have already mentioned, one of the project's salient features was that the counsellors were given skills and broad authority, unlike in other institutions that train and employ para-professional workers. Moreover, the project aspired to maintain high professional standards, and from this standpoint the members of its professional staff filled a major role. Nonetheless, the project's activities were focused on the community and on its representatives on the project's staff: the para-professional counsellors.

Although these two basic elements formed the foundation of the project's work, they were also the seeds of constant inner conflicts: between professional and academic knowledge and the empirical truth of a community trying to grow through its own efforts; and, above all, the latent conflict between the desire to apply well known methods and the inner certainty that the answers are often to be found on an untravelled path, in the hard way of learning through experience, through mistakes and through doing.

Against this background, it is easy to understand why the empowerment of counsellors within the project frequently met with the resistance of the professional staff. Sometimes their resistance arose from hidden fears - that the nurturing of the counsellors might cut the ground from under their feet, for example. Sometimes their reservation was based on sincere concern for the counsellors, that their advancement was too rapid and lacked a sound basis. On more than one occasion, they argued that the counsellors were being asked to take on too many professional tasks without having the benefit of the professional training or the mental tools necessary for deep involvement in the community.

On the external and overt level, these doubts reflected professional attitudes based on a society's accepted criteria for judging people's capabilities and skills. However, on the deeper, covert level, these doubts were an expression of inner fears that, in the process of empowering the para-professional counsellors, the project had gone too far in its journey against the current. For, although Israel is a nation of people who were born and grew up in different cultures and countries, or who are first generation Israelis, it fosters professionalism as a basis for advancement and accomplishment, as all modern societies do. In Israel, however, as in other places, an emphasis is also placed on abilities, positions and social status, and these add up to a 'calling card' that gives its holder access to various social organisations and frameworks. As a result, there is frequently a tendency to ignore the riches of life experience and the need to pay heed to those who may not possess a formal certificate attesting to their qualifications and knowledge.

In establishing and fostering this complex relationship between the professional staff and the para-professional staff, I was often caught in the middle, alone. I had to compromise, explain, moderate tensions, strengthen a weakening link. I had to act as a bridge within the project staff itself between various ethnic groups, between various social classes, between differing world outlooks, and at the same time, to create and preserve a framework that ensured complete coordination between all its elements. And again I had to nurture in private conversations and in staff meetings the sense of belonging, the faith in our power to build and run a

unique project, the confidence in our ability to learn to sing in a chorus, to be in an orchestra.

NOTES ON CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The training programme is described in Part II of the book, in Chapter 6.

2. The EMRA Programme and its aims are described in Chapter 6.

3. During the project's peak period in Morasha (1987) it had a professional staff of six (including the evaluator), a para-professional staff of 16 counsellors in the EMRA Programme, and 20 care givers in family day care centres. In 1988, when the project began operating in other communities, the para-professional staff was expanded: four EMRA counsellors and a coordinator were added in one community – Rosh Ha'ayin – and six counsellors and a coordinator in another – Petah Tikva.

4. This second target population also included women trained by the project to work as para-professional care givers. A description of the process in which this group was nurtured and empowered is given in the next chapter.

5. This working model, which was not based on previous processes and attempts in other places, but which evolved through our work in Morasha, was recognised and adopted by other projects supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, in Israel and abroad.

6. A description of these programmes appears in Chapter 6.

7. The professional categories that form the basis of wage grades are determined in Israel by the Ministry of Finance. Although an exception was made to upgrade the wage scale of the para-professional counsellors working in the project, they still earned less than the professional staff of the project.

8. It should be noted in this context that the project was approved on the basis of a proposed workplan and budget proposal for its implementation. The Bernard van Leer Foundation approved these proposals within an overall four year budget in which no changes could be made in the course of our work, even when we added activities which were not planned in advance but which were developed to meet new needs that presented themselves.

9. For the story of the project's dissemination to other communities, see Chapter 9.

10. The diploma awarded by the project to the graduates of the training course for para-professional counsellors and care givers was not recognised by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, the governmental authority responsible for the training of para-professional workers. The project's battle to obtain official recognition of its training programme is described in Chapter 10.

Chapter Eight

# Education in the cradle

Like a house built on firm foundations, the project was based on one underlying idea: to work inside the community for the community, and to foster from among its people pioneers who would spearhead the movement toward change.

A salient expression of this idea was operating training courses for para-professional counsellors and care givers, who grew in the courses and went on to implement the project's educational and social programmes and, while doing that, to achieve its objectives.

In parallel with the development of the para-professional counsellors, another story unfolded. It was like a project within a project for a specific target population which was part of the larger population in the community: it was the story of the para-professional care givers, the story of the family day care centre.

At first, the counsellors and the care givers embarked together on a common path: the training programme. However, when it was completed, they were split into two groups. The first group, the counsellors, became part of the project staff, and ran the EMIRA programme, from house to house, from family to family, so that the entire community became their territory.

The second group – the care givers – differed in its nature, and consequently, in its needs and mode of development. The sphere and scope of its activity was naturally limited. In most cases, the Family Day Care Centre Programme was operated in the care givers' private homes, and was designed mainly to meet the needs of infants and toddlers (ages zero to three).

The following descriptions in themselves are enough to provide a sufficiently clear picture of the care givers' situation. Each day, for eight consecutive hours, each of them looked after five small children, providing for their physical and emotional needs, and also attempting to enrich their world and foster the process of their development. In other words, the care givers lived in a small world, in every sense of the word. For them, going out to work each morning meant walking from the rooms in which they lived their private lives and raised their children, to an adjacent room in the same house which was allocated for the family day care centre. Their contacts with the children's parents were rather limited, since the programme was aimed at direct work with the children. Thus, the care givers did their work among children, alone in their struggle and their dilemma.

But for the project, the para-professional care givers themselves were also a target population. Like the counsellors, the care givers were viewed as a moving force for change and growth within the community. However, unlike the counsellors, they were not connected to the project on a daily, consecutive basis, so that the process of nurturing them called for a different kind of investment, a different attitude, a different way of coping.

First and foremost, from a formal standpoint, the relationship with the care givers was based on a legal agreement between them and the Early Childhood Association, which served as the agency supervising the operation of the Family Day Care Centre Programme. In parallel, the care givers also signed an agreement with each of the parents of the children in their care.

From a business standpoint, the care givers were self-employed. The funds needed to maintain the family day care centres and to pay the care givers' salaries came from three sources: from the parents (some of whom were asked to pay only a nominal fee); from the Office of Social Services in the Ramat HaSharon Local Council; and, primarily, from the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, which having been recognised by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare as the operating agency, received part-funding from the Ministry.

However, solutions on the organisational and formal level did not suffice to achieve the project's aims in training the care givers to run the Family Day Care Centre Programme. Other activities were required to nurture the care givers: a process of endless learning, an awareness of unforeseen problems and needs, and above all, perseverance and consistency.

In the training programme, and even more so in the course of actually operating the family day care centres, the project's intervention was mainly in the area of support and assistance to the care givers and concern for their continued development. In this intervention, the emphasis was on shaping the care givers' perception of themselves and their role – in the world of the children in their care, and as helpers and role models for the parents, the mothers, and the community at large.

Actually it was less an intervention than a struggle: with prejudices, with a disheartening and debilitating reality, and with deeply rooted outlooks that viewed children "as not yet human beings", whose care involved mainly changing nappies.

In this unglorified reality, we looked for ways to advance the care givers, to heighten their self-image and their professional awareness to the level they merited as educators: to make them see themselves as women who today are nourishing and raising the citizens of tomorrow; as women who have learned that children's education begins from the day of birth and that, in their processes of development, the first years of life are the most decisive. And therefore that education also means the touch of a hand; listening, watching, and learning the world of children; satisfying their physical needs and caring for their health, as well as talking to them in songs and in words, in play and in movements. But never as a substitute for their parents and family home. And that among all these, there is no single element more important than the others, no one component that is more educational than the others. And when all is said and done, the child will always see the adult as a role model.

One can teach all these things in a training programme, but what was needed is a family atmosphere, a sense of belonging to the unique and social club that the project was for its people and for the people of the community. To do that, we had first to make sure there would be a live, ongoing and empowering link between the project

and the care givers. We also had to provide them with an open door where they could find advice, guidance or a chat. But we always had to keep in mind the need for continuous supervision by the programme coordinator, in addition to our follow-up of the dissemination and development of the programme within the community, and in addition to the assistance we gave them in their contacts with the authorities – for example, in obtaining income tax and VAT exemptions.

All of these actions were extremely important, but immeasurably more important were the care givers' identification with the project and their sense of belonging to it. For this purpose, we conducted, as an integral part of the Family Day Care Centre Programme, enrichment and in-service workshops to which all of the para-professional care givers were invited once a fortnight. These were held in the evening hours, at the project offices or in the care givers' private homes and were a regular setting for a group meeting, for the exchange of impressions and experiences, for discussion of common problems, and frequently, for a meeting between the care givers and the project staff. In addition to these workshops, we occasionally conducted in-service training courses for all of the para-professional workers, counsellors and care givers. These courses provided a continuing framework for the training programme, and were a means of encouraging and reinforcing contacts between the counsellors and the care givers.

At the same time, we devoted special attention to nurturing the care givers as self-employed working women. With the guidance of the Early Childhood Association's accountant, we arranged a special workshop in which the care givers received information and explanations regarding their grades, wage scales, book-keeping, and contacts with the authorities. One aim was to gradually release them from their aversion to, if not their fear of, any contact with the establishment, with organisational procedures and with paper work. A second aim of the workshop was to provide them with the necessary tools to assert their independence.

Like the para-professional counsellors who experienced crises in their work, the care givers were beset by problems. After two years of work in their family day care centres, they began to exhibit signs of burnout, fatigue and a loss of motivation: some of them even wanted to close the centres they were running in their homes. I remember a visit to a care giver and she told me about her frustration at not being able to function as a wife as well as keep up her work: 'I take long, long showers at night now, so that my husband will be asleep by the time I go to bed'.

At this stage, in addition to the personal talks we had with the care givers, we asked the evaluator to use the means at her disposal to look into the condition of the programme and the care givers, and to identify the major problems in order to assist us in taking the necessary decisions to rectify the situation. The evaluation that was carried out showed that the care givers were suffering from a severe and long standing sense of loneliness. They felt as if they were doing their work on a secluded island, deprived of any opportunity to share their feelings and experiences, the positive and the negative, the special problems and difficulties or, conversely, their excitement at the sight of a child beginning to react and to speak after a long period of care giving. The care givers also reported to the evaluator that their work required

a considerable physical effort and frequently involved technical problems that called for an immediate solution (a child hurt in a fall, a burst water pipe), but that since they were alone at the centre they were unable to meet all the needs at one and the same time. Many of the care givers contended that if they could work in pairs their sense of loneliness would be alleviated, they could share the load, and could provide better care and education for the children. There were others who said they needed to change direction and wanted to join the staff of counsellors running the EMIRA programme.

Several decisions were taken in the wake of the evaluator's report. The main one was to introduce changes in the original family day care programme by turning some of them into expanded family day care centres, that is, into an educational and care giving facility for ten children, jointly run and supervised by two care givers under one roof. A great deal of effort was required to obtain the establishment's approval for the introduction of these changes, but the expanded family day care centres were finally set up, and later even became the accepted model in other communities in Israel, where the programme was operated by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare.

We also stepped up efforts to bolster the care givers, to improve their self-image, to find ways to diversify their daily schedule and the annual programmes of activities in their family day care centres. The care givers felt the project was doing more to empower the counsellors than for themselves and, as usual, it was me who took the brickbats: "The EMIRA counsellors are your favourites, you pay more attention to them... they are closer to you than we are. You don't visit us enough". Therefore, in order to both temper their feelings of deprivation and alienation and also to strengthen their relationships with the counsellors — and through them with the project — some of the counsellors were integrated into the work of guiding and assisting the care givers during the mornings in their family day care centres.

At the same time, we worked to strengthen and fortify the links between the para-professional care givers and the parents of the children in their care. In this way, we hoped to introduce a new challenge into their work; and increase the parents' involvement in the centres, and to enhance the care givers' status and influence among the parents in particular and the community in general. To achieve this aim, we held joint evening activities for all those involved in the family day care centres, care givers and parents. This served both as an enrichment opportunity and as a meeting point for group discussions.

In special workshops, we created new challenges to make their work more attractive and stimulating, demanding that they see themselves as an important part of the community and the outside world. For this reason, we devoted time to prepare them for work with the parents as well as with the children. They learned the skills needed to get messages across to the parents, to encourage them to become more involved, to develop a productive relationship with them, and to create fitting channels of communication between themselves and the parents. Furthermore, we delegated to the care givers the task of organising and arranging the parents' meetings, which until then had been the responsibility of the programme coordinator.

But there were those for whom this was not enough, those who wanted to join the counsellor's group, for example. These we gave individual consideration, re-examining their skills and aptitudes, and enabling several of them to embark on a new direction and engage in counselling.

Not all of the activities enumerated above were included in the original workplan of the Family Day Care Centre Programme. Some were adopted in response to needs and problems that were not anticipated but arose during processes of self-examination, of evaluation and of learning: of deriving lessons and applying them to the project's work. It was possible to introduce changes and to meet needs that were discovered as a result of the project thanks to its flexible structure and its basic orientation: that is, that programmes could be modified or, if necessary, cancelled. As important as the programmes were, they were no more than a means to an end. The point was the same throughout: the people for whom the programmes were intended, the people who ran them, the people without whom these programmes would have remained on paper, devoid of content and vitality.

The decision to work at one and the same time with counsellors and care givers demanded a considerable effort on the part of the project staff. We had to adjust to varied needs and to propose programmes suited to the two styles of work – with young children and with their parents. We also had to plan and conduct enrichment activities and in-service training courses – separate and joint – for two target groups: the counsellors and the care givers, who were themselves only a part of the picture, specific targets within the broader framework of objectives.

The simultaneous work on two major avenues – the training for both counsellors and care givers – enabled the project on the one hand, to reach out to a very broad population of children and parents, and on the other, to operate as a flexible framework that allowed for internal mobility. Thus, some of the counsellors decided in the course of their work to open family day care centres, while some care givers chose to transfer to work as counsellors.

There were, however, many who viewed the simultaneous training of counsellors and care givers as a weak point and an impediment in the project's training programmes. In my view, based on the experience gained in practical work, this criticism was not valid. In endeavouring to train and empower women from disadvantaged communities, one has to provide them with the best tools, knowledge and methods to work with the community. Separation of domains in a project of this kind may be detrimental to all. In the circumstances in which the project operated, it was impossible to separate the community from the parents, and the parents from their children. It was also impossible to separate the establishment, the professionals, the community services, and the contacts between all of these elements and the population. To put it succinctly: whoever wishes to really empower a weak community and, even more, wishes to promote the community's growth through its people, must provide them with the opportunity to learn everything and to experience everything. An empowering project is not a university: it springs from a certain reality and is directed towards that reality. And in that reality, project time is too short, so must be used to the best advantage as, all too quickly, it runs out.

NOTES ON CHAPTER EIGHT

1. The Family Day Care Centre Programme is described in Chapter 6.

2. At the end of the training course, the graduates were given the opportunity to apply for work in the project's programmes, although some of them had already chosen the role of counsellor or caregiver before or during the course.

3. The role and contribution of the evaluation activity in the project are discussed in Chapter 9.

4. The model of the expanded family day centre was adopted in other communities, including meetings and evening get togethers with the parents, in the same style as they were conducted in the project. However, one key feature of the project's Family Day Care Centre Programme was unique. This was the regular visits and provision of assistance to the care givers by the para-professional counsellors, something additional to the ongoing supervision of the programme coordinator.

5. In order to hold these workshops – which were designed especially for the care givers in the framework of the project only – lengthy negotiations were required with the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, the agency supervising the programme.

Chapter Nine

# Again, and once more, but this time differently

For the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, the autumn of 1986 was a time for summing up four years of activity in Morasha. It was also a period marked by the intensive preparation of a new project proposal for the Bernard van Leer Foundation, to request its support for the continued activity of the project for another four years.

At this juncture, with the completion of a first chapter and preparations to open a new one, the project was at its peak. It success was no longer in doubt, but an established and emphatic fact. This was evident in the project's staff which was a united team, and in its programmes which had now become thriving activities instead of mere plans on paper. Most important of all, success was evident in its dialogue with the community. And although the change had not occurred overnight, it now swept through the community like a rushing torrent: parents came to the project offices as if to their own homes, bringing with them reactions and ideas and new initiatives; mothers came, with their children, bringing a drawing to decorate the office, a cake, or an invitation to a family celebration; and even residents whose children had long been grown came, asking to join the project and to help, perhaps by donating equipment and clothing for the family day care centres, for the pre-schools, for needy families.

And like reverberations of the voices of the Morasha community, ambassadors from other communities – residents and professionals from Israel and abroad – began to visit the project offices, asking to gain a first hand impression, to meet, to consult, to talk.

And as all these people came and went, I found myself facing all the project directors of Project Renewal in Israel after they had realised that this model could be effective in their work as well, speaking to them about my experience and the lessons I had learned from the establishment and operation of the Association.

In the midst of all this activity, a new project proposal was drawn up, with an intensity fed by the accomplishments recorded in the community and the many objectives that were still far from being achieved.

The second phase of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project was intended, first and foremost, to deepen the process of intervention in Morasha, and at the same time – at the suggestion of the Bernard van Leer Foundation – to disseminate the model of action in Morasha to other communities in the area.

In Morasha, the project intended to continue running the major programmes that had proven to meet the real needs of children and parents in the community. Nevertheless, it still was confronted by its primary and most essential objective: to try to turn Morasha into an active and autonomous community, which in future could nurture and empower itself unaided.

Based on our approach and our experience in the field, we felt that if parents in a community were sufficiently aware, cared enough and took an active stand in regard to their children's education, they could replace dependency and lethargy with self sufficiency and action. Therefore, in order to achieve its objectives in empowering the community, the project in its second proposal stressed education for parenting as the area to be reinforced both in existing programmes and in new strategies. To a large degree, this emphasis was drawn from conclusions extracted from the evaluation report which summed up four years of the project's work in Morasha. These conclusions indicated that was there insufficient parental involvement in the project's programmes, an involvement that was perceived as a key factor in fulfilling the project's rationale, that is, empowerment of the community.

These particular fields – education for parenting, and the heightened involvement of parents in the project's programmes, in their children's education and in the dynamics of community awakening – demanded the inclusion of more residents in the project's activities, to establish facilities for group work and guidance and, in particular, to find ways to encourage the fathers' participation and involvement. In addition, we realised that the project had to energetically pursue the process of training women from the community to serve as para-professional counsellors and care givers; and that there had to be an emphasis on their continued advancement and training so they could run educational programmes with a maximum degree of independence. The proposal to continue the project's activities in Morasha therefore was focused on the community level, with its central aims to intensify the process of change that had begun to make its mark on the community, and to strengthen the residents' ability to break out of the vicious circle in which deprivation is passed on from one generation to the next.

In struggling with the challenge of disseminating the project as a model of action, and with formulating a proposal and preparing the ground for expansion, we had first to find communities in the Sharon region whose basic needs were similar to those of Morasha.

Along with the project's ongoing work in Morasha, we embarked on the task of collecting basic data to help us to identify and define target populations for the project's dissemination. After two months of travelling throughout the region, learning, meeting and consulting with various officials and agencies, including heads of local councils, professionals in local authorities, chairmen of neighbourhood committees, residents, representatives of government ministries, *Na'amat* coordinators, and directors of Project Renewal, we formulated the new project proposal. It included; in addition to Morasha, two other target populations: the town of Rosh Ha'ayin, and the Amishav and Yoseftal neighbourhoods in the city of Petah Tikva'.

Once the Bernard van Leer Foundation approved the proposal, an additional dimension was added to the Early Childhood and Family Education Project. Suddenly a whole new area of uncultivated ground faced us. But we lacked first hand experience there; it was unknown – yet so familiar – imposing new rules on us. Again, and once more, questions demanding an answer. But even though this time I had an entire staff with me, all of their queries and apprehensions found their way

directly to my doorstep: how to organise; how to enter into a population unknown to us; how to identify their less obvious needs; how to create contacts with the institutions and services active in these communities; and how to establish cooperation.

And still there was the need to continue expanding the project's activity in Morasha, to suggest fresh ideas, to keep the fire burning.

My first suggestions – to expand the number of members of the Early Childhood Association in Ramat HaSharon, and to change the division of responsibilities within it in order to include representatives of the additional communities – met with objections. This was due to the fear that these might be interpreted as an attempt by one community to patronise others.

Based on a similar pattern of thinking, there were those who suggested that a separate association be set up in each of the communities. However, when we began to look into this possibility, it turned out to be very problematic, in fact nearly impossible, from an organisational standpoint. Others suggested, 'for the sake of equality and democracy', that a separate financial system be set up for each community. This also turned out to be a cumbersome and complicated idea and, even more, a step that would incur much higher costs.

In this process of trying to find the organisational solution that would allow us to begin dealing with the really important issues, I found I was working 15 hour days and constantly dashing from one community to another: trying to begin organising work teams in the new communities; arranging meetings between them and the Morasha staff; planting the seeds for future cooperation between them; explaining the objectives of the project; and learning about the needs in the field. At the same time, to prepare the ground for all our activities, I spent long hours in contact with the municipal authorities and with directors of Project Renewal in each of the communities, Petah Tikva and Rosh Ha'ayin. Again, I had to explain who and what the Bernard van Leer Foundation was, define the aims of the project and its unique features, elucidate working principles, clarify the difference between a project like ours and Project Renewal, and dispel fears of competition, while never deviating from the project's primary objectives.

At the end of these contacts, discussions and disputes about principles of work, management methods and the selection of programmes, a decision was taken to establish a Regional Association that would be responsible for conducting activities in the three communities and would set the project's regional policy.

Based on the Early Childhood Association model developed in Morasha, representatives of the communities and of institutions and organisations with which the project would have working relationships were selected for the Regional Association.

In addition, to solve the organisational question on the community level, it was decided that the Early Childhood steering committees of Project Renewal would

serve as a forum for planning and decision making there as well. In the spirit of this decision, it was agreed that the Early Childhood Association in Ramat HaSharon would continue to serve as a local forum for Morasha's affairs, and its board would select representatives to serve on the new Regional Association.

As the director of the project, who was viewed as the sole representative of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, I had to serve on each of these bodies: on the Regional Association, on the early childhood steering committees in Petah Tikva and Rosh Ha'ayin, and on the Early Childhood Association in Morasha. At that time, in an attempt to calm ruffled tempers and to build an infrastructure so work could get under way, I reluctantly agreed to undertake the added burden of membership of all these forums. In retrospect, this turned out to be a managerial error. For two years, I tried to do the impossible: to manage the entire project, and at the same time to spend hours and days in meetings and discussions in each forum, in each community. It was only when I found the courage to admit to myself that I had erred by giving in to demands and pressures which in no way advanced the project, that I appointed the activity coordinators in Petah Tikva and Rosh Ha'ayin to represent the project in several of the forums.

Once the decision was taken to set up the Regional Association, many obstacles still lay in the path of putting it into practice. For example, many pragmatic discussions were blocked by such decisions as: how to arrive at an equal and fair division of resources; to whom should authority be delegated; how to share the burden of responsibility.

At the recommendation of the Jewish Agency's regional director, it was decided that I would serve as the chairperson of the Regional Early Childhood Association, and that the people authorised to approve expenditures and the allocation of resources, would be elected from among the three communities.

When the task of forming the Regional Early Childhood Association was finally completed, and we requested that all energies be devoted to the dissemination of the project, we were again confronted by power struggles and mistrust on the boards themselves – before we had taken even one real step into the communities. One example was a problem revolving around the Parents' Programme for home counselling that was operated in Rosh Ha'ayin by the MATNAS Association of Community Centres and financed by Project Renewal. When we came to Rosh Ha'ayin, Project Renewal was winding up its activity. To our astonishment, we discovered that the agencies operating the Parents Programme viewed us as a body for donating funds and requested that we allocate the resources earmarked for the work in Rosh Ha'ayin to finance the continued operation of their Parents' Programme.

Although we were faced with approaches such as this which completely misinterpreted our basic objectives, we tried to do our utmost to achieve cooperation and a dialogue. It was decided that, while exhaustively studying the needs of the population, we would do everything necessary to look into the Parents Programme and consider its continued operation in the framework of the project.

After carefully scrutinising the programme, we found that it would be relevant to the population's needs, if women from the community were trained to work as counsellors according to the training programme developed by the Morasha project, and its methods of working in the field. This proposal was rejected by the agencies operating the parents programme. We therefore proposed that the EMRA programme be introduced instead, again after women from the community were trained to work as its counsellors together with counsellors from the previous programme. We suggested a course to supplement their training and integrate them into the project team.

As anticipated, some people stuck to their refusal to cooperate, contending that we had imposed our will on the community having failed to understand what was happening there.

The only reason I now bring up this dismal affair is because it was a typical example – one of many – of the problems we had to cope with in this chapter of the story of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project.

In Morasha, the project continued its intensive activity, at the same time stepping up the process of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the communities of Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva while building up professionals to operate their projects.

In the work of creating channels of communication with the project's new target populations and attempting to acquire first hand knowledge of the real needs of their children and adults, I vividly recalled the difficulties that typified the Morasha project's first days, the experience gained in recruiting candidates for the first training course, and the means adopted to surmount any obstacles. Yet these recollections did nothing to shorten this new work or make it easier. In looking back, I then realised how much the fact that I had grown up and lived in Morasha helped me in constructing the process there. So I learned the hard way what it meant to feel estranged and isolated when working in other communities and to need the mediation of others. I experienced the difficulties of creating direct ties and learning the new 'rules of the game' the project had to play by.

Therefore, in these new communities, the professional and formal aspects, rather than the family aspects, were paramount in recruiting candidates for the first regional training course for para-professionals and afterwards, in the ongoing work there. It might seem to be easier to manage a project in a professional and purposive atmosphere. However, in such an atmosphere it is very difficult to break down existing barriers, to learn the community's internal language, to become attuned to its heart beat and, at the same time, to create a genuine dialogue between the members of that community and the project.

These difficulties also had an adverse effect on forging the new staff into cohesive teams to run the project's programmes in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva, and on the attempt to get them to cooperate and work in full coordination with the project's staff in Morasha. I invested enormous efforts in trying to combat the mentality of centre and periphery – of experts versus trainees, on the one hand, and deprived versus

entitled on the other. It took a great deal of effort to make joint meetings with members of all the staffs a routine procedure and, at the same time, to nurture the sense of belonging to one project; to encourage reciprocal visits to the communities; to promote the exchange of information, experience and knowledge; to temper disputes; to learn to sift the wheat from the chaff; and, above all, to remain faithful to the goals that had brought us together.

Finally, after our continuous and endless hard work, the Early Childhood and Family Education Project did record a number of achievements in Rosh Ha'ayin and in Petah Tikva. Although we did not succeed in reaching the deeper layers, nor did our activity attain the intensity it had in Morasha, we did manage to awaken, to stimulate, to point out some alternative ways, perhaps even to plant the seeds for a process of change in several families, among groups of parents in Rosh Ha'ayin, and among mothers and children in the Petah Tikva neighbourhoods.

As part of the expanded project, two regional courses were held to train para-professional counsellors and care givers. The EMBA programme was operated jointly in both communities, and 100 families participated. In Rosh Ha'ayin, the Family Day Care Centre Programme was also established and nine such centres came into operation. Creativity workshops for mothers were conducted in both communities in conjunction with Project Renewal, as well as an experimental framework to operate EMBA in groups of three to five women – mothers with children of the same ages. In addition, the project provided counselling services and guidance to various community agencies in both these communities.

As in Morasha, the greatest achievements in Petah Tikva and Rosh Ha'ayin was the development of the para-professional counsellors. Their personal development as women, wives and mothers, the experience they gained in counselling other mothers in the community, their daily contact with the project and the constant support they received in their work all made their mark during and after the process of dissemination. Most of them continued to make their contribution by running educational and care giving programmes for early childhood and the family; some of them even pursued higher education, with the aim of advancing professionally.

As I noted in the earlier chapters, credit for a great part of the success in this area in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva is due to the para-professional staff that was trained and worked in Morasha, which served as a role model for many women in the communities we reached out to.

Nonetheless, unlike the situation in Morasha, the process of nurturing para-professional counsellors and care givers in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva did not produce genuine and effective agents of change in those communities.

Now, as I sum up for myself this chapter in the project's story, I can say that costly resources of time, energy and capability were squandered in barren arguments and superfluous power plays. And yet none of these expunged, or even weakened, the will to do, the determination to try.

It was against this background that we met with the members of the communities in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva, and brought them programmes, knowledge and experience: not in order to perfect and cultivate the tools we possessed, but rather to nurture and empower people. We all wanted to open new horizons and present new opportunities for them, to enhance their awareness of their unfulfilled potential, to encourage them to shoulder the responsibility of doing things for themselves, to stop waiting for deliverance at the hands of others. Yet, in dealing with people one never knows when one will strike a responsive chord, and in whom.

However, in retrospect, I view the chapter of the project's dissemination to other communities as an experiment that, from the very start, incorporated an inherent contradiction. We wanted to help, to nurture and empower other communities through our experience in Morasha, but we failed to comprehend that the residents of these communities perceived us – our principles and modes of operation – as outsiders. Moreover, as far as they were concerned, the Early Childhood and Family Education Project was no different than any other establishment-type body coming to their community, pointing out its shortcomings and problems, and proposing its own programmes and methods to rectify the situation it perceived.

There could be a number of explanations for the project's success in Morasha, but in my view it was mainly due to the fact that progress began at the grassroots level inside the community and moved upward and outward.

When we went outside Morasha to disseminate the project to other communities, we made two mistakes: first, in failing to allocate the major part of the resources to find those people in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva who were imbued with a fervent zeal that they could impart to others in the community; second, in assuming that the project's principles and programmes – ones which grew out of Morasha and engendered an inner movement there – could be disseminated and serve as an effective means of awakening internal growth in other communities as well.

In saying this, there is no intention to malign or belittle the basic elements of the project, and certainly not the dynamics it created inside Morasha. The doubt I raise, based on experience, is whether it is at all possible to take a project that has succeeded in one community and move it elsewhere if it lacks the most essential ingredient: people within the community. No one knows better than they the community in which they live and its needs, and no one but they themselves, can generate a process of real change in their community. There are such people in every town, every city, and every community, just as there were people in Morasha who established the Morasha Council, and brought Project Renewal and the Dutch Jewish community into Morasha, and later the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Nonetheless, experience has taught me that it is both possible and important to learn from the experience of others and from operating projects to empower disadvantaged communities, just as we had benefited from the experience gained in the project at Ofakim.

Moreover, the underlying reason for writing this book is the desire to disseminate the Early Childhood and Family Education Project as it developed in Morasha and in its people. In my view, this book is an ambassador; if it ever reaches a community in which there is one person, or a group of people, with genuine aspirations to bring about a change in their community, the story of the project's development in Morasha may give them a compass, some advice, several pointers and, most important of all, it may strengthen their desire to improve themselves and their community.

NOTES ON CHAPTER NINE

1. Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva – two communities located in the Sharon region in the centre of the country – are about half an hour's drive from Morasha.

2. While the characteristics and needs of the Amishav and Yosefthal neighbourhoods in Petah Tikva were very similar to those of Morasha, Rosh Ha'ayin was like a completely different world. It was a closed community most of whose residents were religious: about 97 per cent were Yemenites and about three per cent of Indian origin.

3. The para professional care givers were trained to run family day care centres by the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, while the Family Day Care Centre Programme itself was operated by the Social Services Bureau of the local authority.

Chapter Ten

# On a tightrope

Several other sub-plots formed a vital part of the story of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, from its establishment and throughout its development, during the eight years of its empowering work in disadvantaged communities. Taken all together, these plots added a third dimension to the portrait of the project.

Thus, this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the project's structural and organisational aspects, and to a close look at the project's ties and relationships with the outside world: with its sponsor, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, with the Dutch Jewish community, and with municipal and governmental bodies in Israel.

As I mentioned earlier, the Early Childhood and Family Education Project operated in the form of an association – first a local one (Ramat HaSharon) and then a regional one. This was because this model had been successful in Ofakim, a project also supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

This form of operation had several advantages. First, it provided autonomy and flexibility in management, in making decisions, in running programmes, in raising funds, in hiring personnel and fixing their conditions of employment. A second advantage was related to image: inwardly, to the community, and outwardly, to municipal and governmental agencies, an association is a legal and autonomous body, not a relief or welfare organisation. The third advantage is that an association has an independent and neutral or apolitical status that enables it to enter into ties with institutions and individuals on a professional, rather than on political or institutional, basis. Finally, by the very fact of its existence, an association is an effective body, that appreciably affects the way the community and agencies providing it with services relate to the project.

The special composition of the Early Childhood Association also had an impact on the construction and operation of the project. The members of the association were selected from within the communities in which the project was active, as well as from the municipal and governmental institutions with which the project had a working relationship. The involvement of local residents in managing the association and planning the project's activity was one of the best possible strategies to achieve recognition of the project, to enhance the public's awareness and, above all, to apply the project's guiding principle: that is, that it is the residents themselves who must shoulder the responsibility for empowering their community and improving its condition and image.

The fact that representatives of institutions with which the project would be cooperating also participated in the association was beneficial in several ways: it hastened the recognition of the project by external bodies; it facilitated the project's work; and helped it to acquire the status of a recognized body worthy of assistance and support.

The Early Childhood Association had two main bodies. One, the General Assembly, was also composed of representatives of the residents and of the institutions. It met once a year to approve the auditors' report, the work programme and the budget proposal, to hear a progress report on the project's activities, and to elect the board of the Association and its office holders. The second body, the board of the Association, had 15 members, eight representing the residents and seven the institutions. It met once a month and had the legal authority and the organisational responsibility to the community, the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the establishment. It received regular reports on the project's activities and made all the administrative and organisational decisions required for the project's operation. It also served as the representative body of the project, which had the responsibility for providing support and backup for the project's activities in its relations with other organisations in the community.

In addition to the above reports, the project submitted to the board a workplan and budget proposal at the beginning of each year; and at each year's end a progress report, a fiscal report and a summary evaluation. It also submitted a year end report on staff evaluation, to provide the information needed to take decisions about the project's work force, wage conditions, and the engagement of professional and para-professional staff. For the preparation of this report, the programme coordinators were required to submit written evaluations of the work of the para-professional counsellors and care givers. As the project director, I submitted my own evaluation of each of the project's professional staff members, basing it on their work and on personal conversations.

As I have already stated, the principle of having community members serve on the Association's board was based on the project's main objective: to empower the community from within, through its representatives. However, the fact that the residents formed a decisive majority in the Association, as well as in its main bodies, was not merely an organisational issue, but of far greater significance.

The Association's board gave these people – so involved in the community's life, so conscious of its problems and needs, so determined to do their utmost to help the project realize its objectives – a sense of belonging. Moreover, it was a forum in which they could express and insist upon their opinions and make their contribution to the community – a genuine contribution, for which they received no fiscal compensation.

For years, the representatives of the community spent long hours at the board meetings, and these were always preceded by informal meetings with me to prepare and strengthen them, and to help prevent any rifts from developing between them and the representatives of institutions.

Today, looking back, unencumbered by any managerial responsibility or emotional involvement, I can see to what extent the Association board was like a project within a project for me. Here, as in all the other project's work, the board's activities involved putting the rationale into practice. Although the task of recruiting people to

serve on the board was a difficult one in itself, it was not nearly as complex as the task of activating and steering the board so that it would function not as a rubber stamp, not as a battlefield, but as an essential element of the project, on which representatives of the community, professionals and representatives of institutions served side by side.

The Association's board was to a great extent a scale model of the reality in which the project lived and in which it endeavoured to act and make an impact. Thus, at its meetings, I experienced on the one hand, the difficulty of bridging world outlooks, patterns of behaviour and modes of thinking, and on the other, the joy of teamwork, of the fruitful exchange of ideas. Here, just as with the expanded staff of the project, I often felt I was walking a tightrope, on the fine line between my professional identity as the project director and my personal identity as a child of Morasha.

This fine line became sharply defined during heated discussions, when disputes arose between representatives of the establishment and the professionals on the board, and the representatives of the community. In my mind, I sometimes still hear echoes of the raised voices arguing about priorities, budgetary allocations to programmes, decisions about the project's personnel, and other questions we had to resolve without the benefit of a guiding hand or clearly defined work patterns. There were power struggles, feelings of confusion and helplessness, as well as moments when we nearly despaired of the possibility of conducting the board, with its unique composition, according to democratic principles. However, despite the difficulties, or perhaps because of them, I still retain memories of some golden moments that followed the struggles: the brief discussion leading to a unanimous decision to give one of the project's para-professional counsellors a grant to enable her to study in the university; the cake baked by a woman on the board, as a personal gesture, after the decision was taken to cut down expenses by no longer serving refreshments at the board meetings. There were times when the board, as a united front, gave the project its full backing, and the community representatives on the board were my mainstay in the hard times of misgivings and dilemmas, as well as when the project was drawing to a close, at the end of eight years of activity.

Naturally, the strongest and most significant links of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project and the Early Childhood Association were with the Bernard van Leer Foundation, which supported the project throughout the eight years of its development and activity. The Foundation is an international organisation which supports projects for early childhood development, and such projects often work to empower disadvantaged communities throughout the world. From those to whom it lends its support, the Bernard van Leer Foundation demands high professional standards, which are translated into patterns of communication and work procedures to ensure, above all, that the objectives for which the project was established will be fully realized.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation differs in its nature and its style of operation from many philanthropic bodies. It is committed to professionalism, and therefore concentrates its interest on well-defined frameworks, with specific and pre-defined contents.

From its headquarters in The Netherlands, it maintains close ties with the directors of the projects it supports, according to procedures and work patterns which are agreed with the grant holder. Under this agreement, we submitted workplans, budget proposals, progress reports and fiscal reports each year for the Foundation's approval. In addition to the ongoing reports and the information transmitted by telephone conversations and letters, the project was required to report on its conclusions, achievements and failures in evaluative reports. Some of these related to specific programmes, some to the overall activity, some were in the spirit of formative evaluation, and yet others were summaries.

In addition, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, as a body that supports a network of many projects and innumerable activities, also serves as a laboratory. That is, as a facility for learning, experimenting, and extracting lessons. Towards this end, in addition to the requirement for evaluations, the Foundation encourages every project to allocate resources to documentation, publication, dissemination of professional material, and preparation of educational material and instruction sheets; written, photocopied and on video films.

All of these requirements meant the project had to invest more and more work. We had to inform the Foundation of every stage in the development of the project; to forewarn it of problems; to notify it of extraordinary events as they happened; to ensure the constant collection and processing of data; to translate these into objectives and strategies; to print; to proofread; to mail; to receive reactions; to make corrections. And then to repeat the entire process.

Furthermore, the project had to maintain contacts with other Foundation-supported projects in Israel and throughout the world by means of reports, professional material and documentary pamphlets that have to be read, thought about, and related to.

Sometimes, in its endeavour to help us find ways to advance, the Bernard van Leer Foundation unwittingly bewildered the professional staff. Such was the case when we all watched a video film, sent by the Foundation, which documented a model adopted in Africa to develop parental involvement. The film showed parents in the village building a kindergarten for their children, who carried on their shoulders pails of water from the river to make mud bricks. After viewing the film, we were both astonished and embarrassed. On the one hand, we sensed an implied criticism in the fact that it had been sent to us. On the other hand, even if we had wanted to adopt the model as part of our constant search for ways of increasing parental involvement in the project, it would have been totally impossible in an Israeli landscape which in no way resembled the way of life shown in the film.

Nonetheless, thanks to the Foundation's philosophy and its practical application, the projects it supports operate autonomously and run themselves, in accordance with their locale and the needs of the communities they are attempting to nurture. For the project staff, this autonomy, which allowed the project to heed the community, to be aware of the processes occurring in it, to respond to changing needs, to act on the basis of the situation and not according to preset patterns, was both a mandate and an imperative to them as they took decisions in the course of their work.

At the very same time, this autonomy entailed a heavy burden of responsibility: it required the staff to learn through trial and error and to pay the price. In this constant tension between the freedom to act and the difficulty of bearing the full responsibility for actions and their consequences, the Bernard van Leer Foundation was like a lighthouse, guiding us as we steered our course.

The Early Childhood and Family Education Project, as a body living and working within the Israeli reality, but according to operational standards set for it by the Foundation, often found itself caught between two worlds. The Van Leer professionalism and methodical approach which we adopted as work patterns in developing the professional and para-professional staffs, sometimes looked like other worldly creatures transplanted to an Israeli landscape, the inhabitants of which are often impulsive, abhor any formality, and prefer improvisations to pre-planned actions.

One of my most arduous tasks during the years I directed the project was to constantly explain the nature of the relationship between the project and the Bernard van Leer Foundation: it was usually perceived as a link between a financially dependent body and a funding agency, and nothing beyond that. Countless times, when the staff was greatly overworked, or when the Association's board again and again questioned the necessity for evaluation activities or the constant reports submitted to the Foundation, I found myself between the devil and the deep blue sea. Again and again, I had to explain our obligations towards the Foundation, the reasons for its operation, the rationale behind the demands it made of us, plus the simple fact that the Bernard van Leer Foundation, despite the geographical and cultural distance between us, was our guide and helpmate.

Thus, on the one side there was the Bernard van Leer Foundation and on the other, the Israeli reality, both within the project, but – more significantly – outside it.

From its very first day, one of the primary objectives of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project was to establish relationships with various community, municipal and governmental agencies. We always viewed these links as a vital necessity for the project: they helped to avoid unnecessary duplication, as all the agencies and people working with the community could coordinate goals and programmes. The purpose of this coordination was both to prevent wasting resources and to establish a mutual relationship for the transfer of indispensable information and know how. By establishing links with various organisations and institutions outside the project, we also hoped to achieve organisational and programmatic cooperation with those agencies that were running educational and social projects in the community – and we aspired to make all those setting policy, making decisions and providing services aware of the project's existence and its objectives. Above all, we wanted to establish new channels of communication between all of these agencies and the communities in which we were active.

When all is said and done, we ultimately aspired to generate a real process of change in the community. Unfortunately, changes in lifestyle, in patterns of behaviour and thought within the community do not necessarily lead to a corresponding change in

its image in the eyes of those who have become accustomed to seeing it as a deprived community. Moreover, stigmas and prejudices tend to become fixed, and then they can interfere with a process of rehabilitation and growth – sometimes even obstruct it.

Consequently, throughout all the years of the project's operation, and especially in its early days, efforts were invested in creating cooperative links with as many organisations and agencies as possible, including local councils, government ministries, Project Renewal, voluntary women's organisations, the local community centres, and the family health clinics. These relationships were established in diverse ways. Most important of all, representatives of institutions and organisations were invited to become members of the Early Childhood Association and its board. In this framework, these representatives participated in planning the project's activities and in the process that took place in the community in the wake of this activity. And they also became caught up in the project, became learners themselves.

Also, professionals from various institutions were invited to take part in the project programme, acting as lecturers and instructors for training courses for para-professionals, and for the in-service training courses we held for the entire project staff.

In addition, during the course of the interventions of the project, particular needs and problems were identified among certain groups in the community. These demanded special attention and care, professional services that the project could not provide. So we co-opted professionals and provided them with all the information and assistance they needed to meet these needs.

As well as these, representatives of the project – members of the professional staff and I – took part in the committees and meetings of various forums, for example: Project Renewals' Early Childhood Committee; the social services bureaus of the Ramat HaSharon local council as well as those in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva; the boards of the local MATNAS community centres, and so on. In this continuous process of maintaining working relationships and cooperation with the outside world, we did score several successes, but also met with no end of difficulties, disillusionments, bitter disputes and power struggles. These were particularly pronounced in the project's most trying hours when, instead of help and assistance, we were greeted with criticism and gloating. They were equally pronounced in its finest hours, when others wanted to take credit for its success.

As the majority, the residents always had the final say in all the forums of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project. Although the project invested many efforts in developing ties with various establishment agencies, its main thrust was always directed at the communities, faithful to its goal of meeting their real needs, acting within these communities and for their sake, through ways and means that were not always accepted by those looking at the project from the outside.

Despite our efforts to include professionals from the establishment in planning the project's activity, we were sometimes forced to reject their proposals if they were incompatible with the project's goals – especially those that had received the

Bernard van Leer Foundation's approval and support. We worked very hard to achieve recognition from the establishment, not for the sake of the project, but for the good of the community. However,whether it operated as a system isolated from its surroundings or one that had received external recognition and legitimation, the project always remained what it had been from the outset: a distinct framework outside of the establishment which in its modes of operation, flexibility and autonomy, was perceived as a maverick.

Consequently, the project encountered many difficulties in its work. Perhaps the most glaring example was its struggle to attain official recognition of the diploma it granted to graduates of the training programme for para-professional counsellors and care givers. This struggle, which we waged throughout the eight years of the project's existence, ended in defeat: the competent authorities refused to recognize the diploma. This refusal was actually an expression of their unwillingness to grant official recognition to the entire training programme, the cornerstone of all of the project's other activities in the community.

From our standpoint, our struggle for official recognition of the project's training programme was not prompted by a desire for power, nor was it an attempt to take a poke at the establishment: we regarded it as our obligation to the para-professionals. An officially recognized diploma would have given them access to jobs in institutions engaged in early childhood education, as well as the opportunity to enrol in advanced training courses – a pre-requisite when applying for higher positions at higher salaries.

We firmly believed that our training programme was very effective and of a very high standard. There was also ample proof of that in the results of the para-professionals' field work and in their ability to serve as genuine pathfinders in the community. We therefore could not simply bury our heads in the sand. We knew that without a recognized diploma, the para-professional workers could never find their rightful place outside the project, no matter how impressive their 'informal' achievements were. So we never abandoned our tireless efforts to obtain the establishment's recognition. But we met with failure.

The curriculum used in the project's training programme matched those in courses operated by the establishment to train para-professionals. On its teaching staff were various professionals working in official institutions. In addition, representatives of governmental institutions who served on the board of the Early Childhood Association participated in designing all of the project's activities. Nevertheless, the training programme also was never granted the hoped for recognition, a fact for which I have never been able to find a reasonable explanation. Was it because the entire project was limited in its duration? Was it because in our training programme we were not content merely to meet the basic requirements, but expanded the course and the teaching methods applied in it? Was it because we sometimes accepted into the programme women whose level of education was lower than required in establishment schemes, since in the interviews we found they possessed the necessary fighting spirit? Or perhaps we never achieved the establishment's recognition because, from the outset we viewed the course as a means rather than an

end in itself, and consequently measured its graduates' success not only in the classroom, but also – indeed mainly – in their work in the field? Or could it be because the project was perceived as a rival, as a threat to the establishment's sources of power and authority?

Once a project succeeds in entering a community and working there, once it manages to bring about change and to enlist support, it is immediately seen as an element that offers an alternative to existing frameworks, one that is liable to become a substitute for existing functions, or even worse, to empty them of any content.

A project that springs forth from within a community is like a declaration of intent by that community: that it is prepared to rehabilitate itself and free itself of dependency on support agencies. This is both a salient feature of a project's work with a community and also the source of problems in its relationships with the various official bodies that are also active in that community.

Thus, the project was constantly swinging like a pendulum between the establishment and the community, in a struggle for survival governed by one basic rule: always keep moving between what are seen as two sides, never stop at one of them, because that stop would mean self-liquidation. It is this movement that gave the project its flexibility and freedom, its ability to arouse, to create links, to mediate and to nourish.

But it is important that the movement is not too extreme. As the pendulum swings it must touch both sides, lure them into a middle way. For a project that aspires to bring about change in a community overnight, or to drastically alter the establishment's policies in one fell swoop, is a project that is guilty of hollow pretensions.

In order to make progress in nurturing women in the community we had to invest arduous, constant and uncompromising work. In order to change the image and role of para-professional workers, it was up to us, first and foremost, to grant them authority and assign them responsibility in the framework of the project itself. In this way, we proved to them that they are capable and not inept as they appeared in their own eyes and the eyes of others.

It took eight years of work in different directions to bring about a change in the parents' patterns of thinking, to allay their fears, to dispel the fog that prevented them from seeing things clearly. And even that length of time did not suffice. Even when we managed to score some successes in this area – especially then – the grim reality was like a slap in the face: what good did it do to make a father and mother aware of what was happening around them, of their duty to their children and the importance of their involvement in their education, when in their first meeting with the kindergarten teacher or the schoolteacher, they were shoved aside as a nuisance, as people who had no right or ability to speak their minds?

To put it differently: a project that aspires to bring about change must constantly move between one side and the other – from the community to the establishment, from the establishment to the community.

Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that the Early Childhood and Family Education Project was limited in resources and time. Therefore, its ultimate aim was to create awareness, to open up horizons and reveal opportunities, to be like a beacon showing the way, a beacon whose light is knowledge, messages, guidance, signposts.

If the light is strong enough, the project's impact may make itself felt in unexpected ways, when by its very existence it generates a movement in the neighbourhood in which it lives and works, as well as in those very institutions and agencies that feel threatened by it. If indeed such a movement takes place, there is a better chance that the vacuum left at the project's end will quickly be filled.

Now, at the conclusion of this chapter about the small world of the project in its relationships with the greater world, I should like to devote a few words to the project's very special relationship with the Dutch Jewish community.

This community, which adopted Morasha in order to help empower and nurture it, was also the link between Morasha and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Even after the Foundation gave the Early Childhood and Family Education Project its support, representatives of the Dutch Jewish community continued to donate funds, to lend an attentive ear in difficult moments, to give some good advice, to be our mainstay.

Tactfully, and out of a sense of partnership, they also knew how to point out mistakes and criticize; never patronisingly, but always as a sister community of Morasha, and as people who were modest enough to take pride – and to express that pride publicly – in every step forward taken by the project, and particularly by the community of Morasha.

Part four

# The freedom of choice

*Accept what is given to you modestly,*
*and be not reluctant to part with it*

(Marcus Aurelius)

# Between inputs and outputs: a reckoning

At various times during the project, two other sub plots came into play: in one evaluators were the protagonists, in the other the project director. These were times when a programme had to be implemented, when decisions had to be taken, when changes had to be introduced, and when, to sum up, objectives had to weighed against achievements, goals measured against failures, everything known and proven balanced against the hidden and the as yet unknown.

Regular and systematic evaluation was one of the main building blocks in the edifice of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project. Throughout the eight years of the project's activity, the purpose of its evaluation efforts was to collect and provide information on four major areas: the degree of compatibility between the project's objectives and the principles underlying the programmes designed to achieve these objectives; the quality of the programmes as a means of achieving objectives; an examination of the programmes' implementation procedures, modes of operation and strategies, in relation to their rationale and the broader aims of the project; and finally, an examination of the programmes' products in the light of the needs they were intended to fulfil, and of their impact on the target populations.

In accordance with guidelines from the Bernard van Leer Foundation and decisions of the board of the Early Childhood Association, evaluation activities in the project were conducted in the spirit of 'formative evaluation', which was intended to provide feedback, and to assist in the making of decisions and the setting of policy – as an integral part of the project's operation on the one hand, and of its process of development on the other.

The story of the evaluation of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project began with a team of experts from Ben Gurion University in Beersheba, who had previously been the evaluators of the Ofakim Project. However, since ours was a project in which every last detail was a part of one internal dynamic, the task of evaluation was quickly entrusted to a full time evaluator, who was engaged as a member of the project staff. This decision, which at the time was the outcome of intuition rather than well thought out consideration, was the basis for a model adopted in other Bernard van Leer-supported projects in Israel, that is, evaluation conducted by a person working inside the project.

A systematic evaluation activity as an integral part of the project's functioning and development was one of our obligations to the Bernard van Leer Foundation: an incontrovertible necessity. Moreover, during the project, particularly in its more exacting stages – when unanticipated problems arose, when we needed to take decisions about a particular programme or strategy, when it was necessary to extract lessons from some activity and put them into practice – at all these stages, evaluation proved to be an indispensable tool that enabled us to take a more objective and penetrating look at our work while it was going on.

Nonetheless, the evaluation activity was always beset by difficulties and disputes. First of all, because it was – at least on the Israeli scene – a relatively new and unfamiliar activity, and one usually perceived as a threat. Many members of the project's staff failed to understand the need for evaluation. They did not understand why they couldn't simply submit reports or why they were asked – in addition to their heavy workload – to provide data to the evaluator, to cooperate with her when necessary, and to report, to supply information and, worst of all, to accept advice, to take criticism graciously.

Members of the Association's board viewed evaluation as a waste of resources, as an academic type of activity, irrelevant to field work, a luxury that a nurturing project cannot afford to indulge in.

It took time, and patience, and repeated explanations to enable the evaluation to operate as it needed to. Gradually, due both to the feedback it provided and the conclusions it submitted on the basis of actual events in the field, and to a long process of familiarisation and learning on the staff and the board, the evaluation activity began to cast off its threatening image and to acquire its rightful status within the project family.

As the project director, I was the first one to profit from the evaluation and also the one who had to protect it and to justify its existence – not because evaluation was a requirement of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, but mainly because it was so beneficial to the project during its development.

Unquestionably, a systematic evaluation activity is a key instrument for locating problems, pointing out new directions of activity, taking decisions and setting policy. This is particularly true in a project which is in a constant process of building and development and creating models, both of organisation and of content. Indeed, a great many of the project's programmes that were developed and perfected in the course of their operation, were based on evaluation findings, on conclusions in evaluation reports and on recommendations. For example, it was through evaluation that we learned about the loneliness of the para-professional care givers – the owners of the family day care centres – and were able to help in developing the model of an expanded family day care centre. It was also the evaluation activity that helped us to see and understand that parental involvement in the programmes was not satisfactory and there was a need to invest more resources in education for parenting.

In addition, the evaluators always functioned as my advisors. Their special position on the project enabled them – even when tempers ran high – to see things from a distance, to put things into perspective, and to analyze with composure and common sense situations that seemed complicated and irresolvable. I often found that the presence of evaluators on the project – inside it, but always a bit outside as well – helped to resolve pressure, internal friction, hesitation and indecision. Above all, one should not forget the important long range contribution of evaluation – to other projects, to additional nurturing programmes, to research studies.

Nonetheless, some things cannot be measured or expressed by means of evaluation. And although they cannot be quantified, nor have their quality tested or their impact measured by the tools and criteria of evaluation, this does not mean they do not exist. I am referring most of all to the happenings that made up the project, to its uniqueness that is difficult to gauge even within the project itself. For how can one examine today a process that has not yet ended, that has been planted like a seed in people, in a community?

And in an examination of outputs versus goals, where do the 'little' achievements come in? How can one predict today what kind of adults will develop from the children who grew up in the family day care centres and the pre-schools? And how is it possible, using evaluation tools, to measure and examine the real life stories that can be found woven into the fabric of the project. As these come to mind some bring a smile to my face, some cause me pain, while others never fail to amaze me. Because, as strong as my faith was in the power of people's ability to do things, even I am surprised time and again, story after story.

'For twenty years I've stayed at home and spent all my time raising my children and looking after my family. This is my world and I'm proud of it'. Sarah told me one hot summer afternoon, when I came to her home to suggest she enrol in the first training programme for para-professional counsellors. 'My daughter, the child of my old age, brought me the notice the kindergarten teacher gave her about registration for the course. And I'll tell you the truth, Simcha, you know me so well despite the difference in our ages. We grew up on the same street. I remember you as a child when I was a young girl. I always admired your mother; my friends and I loved to go to see her, to talk, to get her advice. But now that I'm in my forties, I'm not sure this is the right time to take up your offer to study and acquire a profession.'

This leap that Sarah made from the present to the past and back to the present reinforced my inmost feelings about the need to establish the project. Because despite her reservations, despite her reluctance, I sensed she really wanted to try, to dare to take the step. Still, when I suggested she rely on me, just as she had relied on my mother in the past, I was apprehensive. And my apprehension only grew the next day when Sarah agreed to join the course. These fears were dispelled once I saw how she was developing, when I began to sense the turnabout she was experiencing. When she finished the training course, Sarah began working as a counsellor in the EMIRA Programme. A short time later she came to see me at the project office, waving her wage slip – the salary for her work, the first she had ever received.

She asked me to explain how the slip was structured: 'Why is there one amount at the top of the slip, and a different amount at the bottom? Why have they deducted that from my salary?' Sarah didn't frame the diploma she received at the end of the training course, but she did frame her first salary slip, and hung it in her living room – a symbol of the change in her status, in her lifestyle, in her role in the home and in the community.

In later years, Sarah was appointed to the senior staff of counsellors, becoming an outstanding exemplar of a woman who had made a breakthrough in her life. She had

never completed her elementary education; for twenty years she lived her entire life within the confines of her home and her major role was to lend support to her husband who was her link with the outside world. And yet, in her middle years, she learned to recognize herself and her hidden and repressed abilities. Sarah did not rebel against tradition or reject accepted norms; she simply expanded them by discovering her unfulfilled potential. For so many years she had denied the very existence of this potential because she was educated to believe that her sole purpose in life was to give birth to children and to raise them.

Sarah was not content only to complete the training course. Over the years, she enrolled in advanced courses and enrichment workshops both inside and outside of the project. The crowning point of her studies was her enrolment in the Open University, where she took courses in the Fundamentals of Education and Social Psychology. Sarah repeatedly told me: 'I had a good life; I didn't feel I was missing anything. But the project opened up a whole new world for me, one I never thought I could be part of. Today I am certain I'll never go back to being a housewife. Even if the project closes down, I'll go on working. It's possible to be both a good mother and a working mother.'

During the last year of the project in Morasha, Sarah enrolled in a training course for work with children with disabilities. As part of her daily work on the project, she had learned that she was capable of helping families with exceptional children to cope with their social and economic hardships and the constant struggle to care for their child. When the EMRA Programme in Morasha closed down, Sarah did not go back to being a housewife; today she is working as a counsellor in a clubhouse for retarded children in Ramat HaSharon.

The process of Sarah's growth, like the process of the project's own development, was not lacking in crises, failures and disappointments. Those who tried, with the project's help, to make a real change in their lives had mixed feelings of elation and despair; yet they knew they had to persevere. Unfortunately, in Morasha there were also some women, like Limor, who were not quite ready to undergo the process, or who simply gave up, yielding to forces they thought were stronger than them.

Limor, a young woman in her twenties, was born and raised in another disadvantaged neighbourhood in Israel. She came to Morasha after her marriage, at a very young age to a local man. When one of the EMRA counsellors met her, Limor was the mother of a three month old infant and a three year old girl. Limor participated in the EMRA Programme, and as her relationship with her counsellor developed, she gradually began revealing her problems and dilemmas, not only as a mother, but also as a young woman: 'I never finished school, and I have no profession. I got married when I was very young, and all I've managed to do so far is work as a cleaning woman, since my husband doesn't earn enough' she said. 'And I know I can do more than that, just like you' she told the counsellor who came from a similar background, so that they both spoke the same language. 'I told the social worker my problems, but she didn't exactly understand me' Limor went on, in the private language they shared.

When Limor's participation in the EMRA Programme drew to a close, the counsellor persuaded her – with the encouragement of the project staff – to enrol her child in a family day care centre and to join the project's training programme. That's when I met Limor for the first time.

Our second meeting took place early one morning, at an hour when the counsellor and the coordinator had told me I could find Limor at home. The purpose of my visit was to try to find out why Limor had discontinued her studies in the training programme and why she was ignoring the calls and letters from the counsellor and the project staff. For me, this was an extremely painful conversation: it brought to the fore all of my old uncertainties and qualms about the project's ability to bring about change and to help those who want to be part of it. In our talk, I learned what had put a stop to Limor's attempt to strike out in a new direction: 'My husband needs me to go out to work now. You know that by cleaning houses I'll work fewer hours and invest less of myself, but I'll make more money than I would at the project even if I finish the course and get a job as a counsellor. I have no choice; I think he's right.' All attempts to dissuade her were of no avail; Limor never returned to the project. But just as she had awakened doubts, she also attested to the fact that the project had chosen the right course. For her parting words to me were: 'Don't worry. My daughters won't work as domestic help.'

Osnat played a special part in the story of the project's development. She first embarked on a new path in Project Renewal which set up and ran the *Alch* Centre in Morasha . Under the guidance of the social worker who was responsible for running the *Alch* Centre, Osnat worked as a para-professional counsellor helping to recruit mothers and counsel them in the Centre. To supplement her knowledge, Osnat was sent to the training programme for para-professional counsellors and care givers of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project . After completing her studies, Osnat decided she wanted to be a counsellor in the EMRA Programme; she felt lonely in her work at the *Alch* Centre and wanted to find a group she could belong to.

In the innumerable talks I had with the counsellors, I always found Osnat to be a quiet, unassuming woman, so I was somewhat surprised when she broke her silence and asked for a personal meeting with me. That meeting between us was much more than a talk; it was more in the nature of Osnat's declaration of independence: 'I have decided to register for evening school, to complete my studies and get my matriculation certificate. My children are already big, I'm in my early forties, and I think it's time I had at least a matric. What do you think?' In this conversation, in which Osnat broke through the barriers of silence, I understood from her personal story how frustrated many of the counsellors were and that they wanted to overcome more obstacles, to continue advancing, to grapple with the unsettled question: what next?

'What will I do when there isn't a project?' Osnat asked. And before I had the chance to reply, she said: 'As much as the project tries to help us, as much as you try to help us, you know very well that the professionals and the establishment don't accept us; they don't have the same attitude towards us. I have to keep moving ahead.'

During the morning hours, Osnat continued working as a counsellor, in the afternoons she looked after her children and her home, while at night she studied. Gradually, she also became one of the leaders in the group of counsellors. Although outwardly she always looked very composed and unassuming, her inner fervour never abated. The other counsellors expressed their appreciation of Osnat and her efforts by selecting her for the position of deputy coordinator of the EMRA Programme, and later – in the final phases of the programme in Morasha – by choosing her as the programme coordinator, a position which until then had been filled by a professional.

It was Osnat who ran the meeting with the graduates of the first regional training course for mothers from Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva on their first day as employees of the project. By herself, and in her own words, Osnat told the new counsellors that she had just completed her studies and had received the longed for matriculation certificate. Osnat's personal story, as she shared it with the new counsellors, was more powerful and vivid than any theory or method they had learned in their course. When Osnat was through, one of the new counsellors turned to me and asked: 'Do you think that one of us could also some day become a coordinator, like Osnat?' Before I could gather my thoughts and answer, it was Osnat who replied: 'It doesn't depend on Simcha. It's the project. You understand? The project: the work in it, the families and my co workers, they helped me!'

On the way back to Ramat HaSharon, Osnat admitted to me that she had been very apprehensive about the meeting with the new counsellors. And in the same breath she notified me that she was planning to terminate her work in the project: 'I've decided to go on studying. I'm capable of doing more' and she added, to sweeten the bitter pill, 'and you – more than anyone else – ought to understand me. I've registered at the Kindergarten Teachers seminary in Tel-Aviv; I've always wanted to be a kindergarten teacher.'

Osnat left the project after working in it for five years, but she never disappeared. Every time we met on the street, in the clinic, or when she came to visit the project, she kept me informed of her progress in her studies and told me how much the things she had learned and experienced in the project were helping with them. For many months, I didn't see Osnat or hear about what she was doing. During that time, the project ended, and I also went my own way, to a new workplace outside of Morasha. There I received a telephone call from Osnat: 'Hello, Simcha, I wanted you to be the first one to know. You remember that after I completed my training as a kindergarten teacher, I went on to the university to get a B.A. in special education? Today I completed my studies and I'm about to receive my degree. Now you can show everybody that a para-professional can also become a professional in the true sense of the word.'

An impartial observer would think that Esther and Noga were two women from different countries and backgrounds, while they actually only differ in their age and outward appearance. Noga, a child of Morasha, is a young woman in her twenties, dressed in the latest fashion. Esther from Rosh Ha'ayin, a woman in her forties, wears a simple cotton dress and covers her head with a kerchief.

Noga came to the project as a trainee in the first training course held in Morasha, not due to economic distress, but because she had decided to do something for herself 'before it's too late' as she put it. In the interview prior to her acceptance to the course, I learned her personal story. In the early 1960s, Noga was four years old when her parents decided to immigrate to Israel from Kurdistan in northern Iraq. She grew up, together with her four brothers and sisters, in a two room house. There were two mothers in that home: her father had taken two wives, with the permission of the community's rabbi in Kurdistan, because his first wife was barren. Noga's father – who was usually 'under the influence' – only worked at odd jobs. The burden of earning the family livelihood fell mainly on the shoulders of Noga's natural mother, who worked as a cleaner in a psychiatric hospital, while her 'stepmother' was responsible for the education and care of the children.

Noga went to school until she was 15. At the age of 16, she was sent by the social worker to learn hairdressing, even though she didn't see that occupation as her goal in life. At the tender age of 17, Noga broke through the barriers of deprivation by getting married. But she did not find this to be a satisfying way out: 'For days, I walked around feeling as if I were suffocating. When I was 18 and all my friends were going to the army, I was already a mother, and if it wasn't for the help of my mother-in-law and my older neighbours, I wouldn't even have known how to care for my baby. Even though my husband has always been loving and supportive, and tries to compensate me for everything I lacked while I was growing up, I am still searching for some way to fulfil myself, something that can help me raise my children in a better way than I was raised. I read the notice about the training programme, I talked it over with my husband, and I have decided that it's worth a try.'

From that day until the last day of the project – for eight whole years – Noga covered a lot of ground with the project and, one can almost say, underwent a transformation. Her outward appearance changed, as well as her ability to express herself in speech and in writing. As her self-confidence increased, her faith in her ability to contribute – to herself, her family and the Morasha community – also grew stronger. After becoming a counsellor in the EMRA Programme, Noga advanced to the position of deputy coordinator of the family day care centre Programme, and then to coordinator of the Pre-school Programme, a position which until then had been filled only by a professional. Throughout all that time, Noga attended every course, workshop or study programme offered inside and outside the project, finally graduating with honours from a course on Community Work in Deprived Neighbourhoods at Bar-Ilan University.

When Noga ended her work at the project, she decided to apply for the position of coordinator at the Morasha community centre: 'They are looking for a professional with an academic degree' she told me when she came to ask my advice. 'I plan to do whatever I can to get that job. Because I know Morasha, its people and its needs better than any professional. The knowledge I acquired through the project isn't taught at any university. They can't even teach you how to create relationships with parents, with children and professionals and to mediate between them.' In the fighting spirit so characteristic of her, Noga told me: 'I simply am not prepared to

have them bring someone from outside Morasha again. Because if they do, then everything we did and fought for, all of the efforts we invested, won't mean a thing.' Noga got the job. Today – now a mother of four – she is engrossed in promoting programmes and activities for parents and young children in the community centre. In the spirit of the project – which is deeply embedded in her – she tries to impart the work patterns she learned to the staff of counsellors and professionals who work under her. In this new setting, she also encourages others to work according to workplans and progress reports – 'as I learned to do in the project.'

Noga was also the motivating force behind Esther from Rosh Ha'ayin, a mother of six, who had come to Israel as a child from Yemen. When Esther joined the project she had to cope not only with the new concepts and approaches she was introduced to in the project, but – as a woman educated in a strict religious and traditional atmosphere – with inner conflicts as well.

Noga and Esther initially met in the first regional training course, in which Noga lectured on the EMRA Programme and its mode of work. This first encounter developed into a relationship in which Noga became Esther's mentor. Despite the twenty year difference in their ages, it sometimes seemed as if Noga were the mother and Esther her child. 'Don't break down, keep learning' Noga repeatedly told her, whenever Esther showed signs of weakening. 'If I've succeeded, so can you. I'll help you. This is a chance that may never come again.' The link between them continued and never was severed, even when Esther began working in the EMRA Programme in Rosh Ha'ayin. The landmark of Esther's first breakthrough was not her diploma from the course or her first wage slip, but the day she first sat with her small children to help them with their homework. But her greatest joy and triumph came when she received a letter from her son in the army. She brought to the project office to show me: 'Until now I never had the courage to write to him, because I was afraid I'd make spelling mistakes. From the time I finished elementary school, I never wrote anything. Now thanks to the project which forced me to go back to reading and writing, I feel confident enough to write a letter to my son. And, look, today I received a reply from him.'

For years, Aviva worked as a salaried care giver in one of the family day care centres run by a women's organisation in Morasha. But deep down inside, she always felt she was not developing and advancing because she was not fulfilling her potential. I still don't know what led Aviva to decide to leave a secure workplace, to come to the project, and ask to open a family day care centre in her home. Because of her experience and training, we decided to comply with her request to open a family day care centre for five children.

That same year, an additional training course was opened, and Aviva's mother, a grandmother in her fifties and a hard working housewife who had only learned to read and write as an older woman, signed up for it. To my surprise, Aviva also asked to join the training programme. And then it turned out she was the one who had urged her mother to enrol in the course. This was the first time – although not the last – that a mother and daughter studied together, in one training course, and then jointly opened an expanded family day care centre.

But Aviva's story did not end here, for she – like Osnat – also gave some thought to the time after the project's end. In the course of her work, she enrolled in a training course for qualified care givers given in Tel-Aviv by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare – a course which gave her a diploma that was recognized by the State and enabled her to operate a family day care centre privately. Thus, when the project closed down and the continued operation of the Family Day Care Centres Programme was transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Welfare and the Ramat HaSharon Local Council, Aviva and her mother did not need any additional support. Until this very day, they are independently running an expanded family day care centre for ten children. It is very much in demand.

Rivka, a mother counselled in the EMRA public day care center, whose children attended a family day care centre, came to the project at the urging of her neighbours – the counsellors and owners of family day care centres – who never let up until Rivka decided she too would enrol in the training course for para-professional counsellors and care givers.

When she arrived for her interview, Rivka was shaking, holding on to the counsellor who accompanied her, like a frightened child hiding behind her mother's apron. Haltingly, she asked if she could get help: 'I want to study, I want to get ahead, but I've forgotten how to read and write, and my Hebrew is very weak. I only had six years of schooling, and then I went out to work with my mother. I got married and brought children into the world, but I never read, I never wrote. And they told me that in the course I'll have to write papers and pass tests. I told the counsellor that's not for me, but she said that you're here to help me. I love children and I want to work with them.'

This was a difficult decision for the project staff; there were endless arguments until we decided to accept Rivka to the training course if she agreed to improve her command of Hebrew in evening classes while she was studying in the course.

Although I have witnessed many hard struggles, it is difficult for me – even today – to find words to describe Rivka's unremitting efforts. Whenever I think of her, I always recall the day when she sat with the course coordinator, in a separate room, answering examination questions orally, while her fellow trainees wrote the same exams in an adjacent room.

There was no stopping Rivka. She completed the training course and her evening studies to improve her Hebrew, but instead of applying for work in the project, she decided to try her luck elsewhere: 'I read an advertisement that they're looking for a care giver in a family day care centre, and I decided to apply. I'm going to the interview with the diploma and the recommendation I received in the project, and I'm going alone' she ended, as if she were closing a circle. Rivka got the job as a care giver in the family day care centre, where she works until this day.

The Early Childhood and Family Education Project performed conscientiously for eight whole years. When the curtain fell and the stage disappeared from sight, and the

summarising evaluation report on the project's activities was completed, only one question remained: "Have the actors disappeared as well?"

This is obviously not the kind of question that evaluation deals with. But as far as I am concerned, it's the most important question of all. The stories in this chapter – a few out of many – are the stories of people living in Morasha, Rosh HaAyin and Petah Tikva, who continue to 'act' on the stage that was there before the project and remained after it.

Do they still carry the project within themselves? Does the process of inner growth still continue? Have any of them succeeded in breaking through other barriers, in attaining other achievements?

In making a reckoning before and after evaluation, I mused about these thoughts – in the vague area that lies between what is pre-determined and what we are always free to choose.

NOTES ON CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. For obvious reasons, the names used in the stories related here are fictitious. It is also important to mention that these stories are no more than a representative sample of many others.

2. See Chapter 6.

3. From 1983 to 1986, the two projects operated in parallel.



HQ4

Chapter Twelve

## In first person plural

The simple truth is that the story of the Early Childhood and Family Education Project is also my own story, for better or for worse. But mostly for better.

And today it seems to me, as I look back, that this was a challenge which was tailor made for me. It was one into which I could channel my inner struggle, my rebellion and my drive to prove – not only to myself, but also to the community that was and still is my home – that things could be changed.

Throughout, even when my conviction seemed unfounded, I was seeking to prove that, even if the community was relatively weak, even if its socioeconomic status was low, that was no reason to seal its fate, to brand it with the label 'disadvantaged', to treat it as an adult does a small child, looking at it from above, looking at it from outside. I came to the project as a child of Morasha. I managed it from within myself and from within the community, and I emerged from it even more a child of Morasha than I had been before.

There were those who said the battle I waged in the community through the project – to awaken it from its slumber, to expose its inner core, its inherent strengths – was a quixotic battle. And as for my determination to endow its residents with the power of action I was given as the project manager, they said: 'castles in Spain', a managerial error, dangerous naivety. But I never stopped seeing Morasha as a huge garden that although overgrown with thorns and brambles, yet had flowers in it too. I persisted in seeing Morasha as a community that had produced doctors, lawyers, high ranking army officers and academics, and that was full of ordinary, decent, upstanding, hard working people who could also proudly hold their heads up.

With all my strength, I fought against the Morasha that was passive and self-deprecating, that cultivated a mentality of living down to expectations; that same Morasha that raised people who learned so well to wear the mask of the deprived that it became their only face.

I had no slogans, and even if I had, it was impossible to use them to bring about any change: I couldn't brandish them to neighbours, to childhood friends, to schoolmates, to anyone who was with me in the very same boat. It was there, in the community from which I came that I waged the most difficult struggle of all: against the expectations that were addressed to me; against the encounters with people waiting to see me fail, to prove to themselves and to me that the passive way was the right way; against the envy in the eyes that never saw the price I had to pay, but saw only the car, the titles, the manager.

To manage a project in the community in which I was born and in which I lived meant working 24 hours a day: in the streets, in the local cafe, in the supermarket, in the clinic, in the bank, in the clothing store, and even in my parents' home. I had to represent the project, to be Van Leer.

As the representative of the project, I often had to exercise self-restraint, listening in silence to scornful and hostile comments, and on the other hand, I had to moderate excessive expressions of support. And between the envy and resentment on the one hand, and the sincere support on the other, I tried to do the task I had undertaken, one I was resolved to bring to the finishing line.

From these standpoints, it was much easier to manage the project's activity in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikvah. But even there I never forgot for a moment that the project was born and grew up in Morasha, that it was the residents of Morasha who accompanied me from the project's first day in the winter of 1982 until it was closed down at the end of 1990.

I loved the project, and believed in it because it grew up from below, from the grassroots. And in a grassroots project, you have to translate into workplans and methods the needs of flesh and blood people, of people who react in every conceivable way.

To manage a project that grew out of a real life situation and is directed towards it, one has to be in touch with the very pulse of life, to be attuned to the slightest reflex, to create an ecology in which people can grow: the people who run the project; those for whom the project is intended; and those who during the project have crossed the line between these two points.

To operate and manage a project like this, one has to constantly discover new needs and new target populations, and to find out how and for whom the project can provide solutions. And at the same time, to learn how to avoid getting side-tracked, how to avoid getting swept away by strong currents, how to withstand pressures from within. And constantly one must try to do just a bit more, a bit above and beyond and, by so doing, to slow the forward movement of the clock a little.

No revolution took place in Morasha. Nevertheless, many more parents are involved today in their children's education, are members of parents committees, are active in the kindergartens and schools, are attending enrichment activities and classes at the community centres, and are joining various public committees. Many children in Morasha still find it difficult to compete with their peers from the well established neighbourhoods of Ramat HaSharon. Nevertheless, many of these children have overcome some formidable obstacles. And they also take part in various youth clubs and classes after their school day.

Among the women who began in the Early Childhood and Family Project, many are successfully running family day care centres in their homes, some work as para-professional counsellors in other communities, others are continuing their studies in institutions of higher education. The day care centres and other settings for child care in Morasha are filled to capacity. Many more women are going out to work, to attend enrichment classes, to pursue higher education.

And it seems to me that if the project were to open today, it would be easier to reach out to people in the community, to get them moving, to get them to participate in the

work at hand. The reality is still far from the vision of an autonomous community, but one ought not to belittle the change that has taken place, the progress that is obvious to anyone taking a close look from the inside.

Morasha, as I see it today, needs nurturing at the community level. And in hindsight, I have a sense of a missed opportunity in relation to one key aspect: that we did not manage within the project to deal more intensively and deeply with the ability of the community to take over the work and carry it on. Looking back, I feel I missed an opportunity by not doing enough to prepare the representatives of the community in the Early Childhood Association to take over the project when it ended, to look after it themselves and to operate it through community programmes.

Today, inside Morasha, still close and yet now farther away, I watch and wait, to see the seed that was planted grow into a fruit bearing tree.

And something in me is still putting things to the test. And something in me still finds it hard to accept the parting.

Appendix 1

# Profile of The Early Childhood and Family Development Project

The Early Childhood and Family Education Project, which was operated for eight years from 1982 to 1990 by the Early Childhood Association, with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, was intended mainly to assist in empowering populations in Israel defined as 'disadvantaged'.

The project was established in 1982 in the Morasha neighbourhood of Ramat HaSharon, and worked within that community for four years. Late in 1986, its activity was expanded to include the town of Rosh Ha'ayin and the Amishav and Yosettal neighbourhoods in the city of Petah Tikva.

Representatives of the three communities in which the project was active served on the board of the Early Childhood Association, along with representatives of the local authorities, of Project Renewal and of the local MATNAS community centres. This board set the project's policy, the annual budgets for the operation of its programmes and its employees' salaries, and acted as coordinator between the various agencies that were part of the project. The organisational framework – which was responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring the activity – included the administrative and professional workers of the project.

To cope with the challenge of nurturing communities of a low socio-economic status, the Early Childhood Association adopted basic guidelines that formed the infrastructure for the project's activities during the eight years of its existence. The project – as its name indicates – focused on designing and implementing programmes in early childhood and family education, since it is in this area that the disparities between well established communities and weak communities come to the fore. For this reason, early childhood activities were not viewed in isolation, as separate from the broader social context. Underlying the process of intervention was a recognition of the need to create an integrating framework which would strengthen all those who fill a role in the child's education and socialisation. This was believed to be the most effective way to help and empower both children and adults, beginning with the family unit and ending with the entire community. Moreover, as a unique point of departure for the project's activity, it embraced the principle that a nurturing programme must spring from the community and work for the sake of the community, on the basis of identifying the real needs of its children and adults and with the aim of helping the entire community – all of the individuals in it – to break out of the vicious cycle of passivity and dependency.

These approaches, when translated into practice, mean working with the community and from within the community; not on the basis of pre-planned strategies of action, but rather by daily searching, experimenting, and coping in the actual field.

Appendix 2

## Milestones in the project's history

November 1982: The Bernard van Leer Foundation approves the proposal for the Early Childhood and Family Education Project, at the first stage in Morasha, Ramat HaSharon.

January 1983: The project opens its offices in the Kiryat Ha'Tzirim community centre in Morasha.

March 1983: The project hires its first professional employee.

July 1983: The establishment of the Early Childhood Association in Morasha is officially approved.

October 1983: The first training course for para-professional counsellors and care givers is opened; the official opening ceremony of the project in Morasha.

December 1983: The EMRA Home Visiting Programme begins operation in Morasha.

January 1984: The Family Day Care Centre Programme begins operation in Morasha.

April 1984: The project receives permanent offices from the Ramat HaSharon Local Council.

1984 - 1985: The project expands its activity and begins working jointly with several agencies:

- in providing counselling to care givers and parents in the Na'amat day care centre;
- in operating full-day kindergartens in Ramat HaSharon (*Gila*);
- in conducting creativity workshops in community clubhouses in Morasha;
- in setting up listening corners in the public libraries.

1986 - 1987: The project takes over responsibility from Project Renewal for the continued operation of the *Aleh* Centre, and:

- introduces a programme for fathers' involvement (a counselling group);
- runs an enrichment programme for grandmothers;
- operates the Pre-school Programme in Morasha (as a continuation of the Family Day Care Centre Programme).

November 1986: The Van Leer Foundation approves the proposal for the continued operation of the project for another four years, as well as the expansion of its objectives.

The transition to phase two: regional activity in Ramat HaSharon, Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva.

September 1987: The first regional course to train para-professionals opens.

November 1987: The official opening ceremony of the regional project is held (in the Rosh Ha'ayin community centre).

January 1988: The EMRA home visiting programme goes into operation in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva.

March 1988: The *Alch* Centre is closed down.

June 1988: The EMRA Programme in Morasha is closed down.

July 1988: The establishment of the Regional Early Childhood Association, as the body responsible for the project's regional policy in all three communities, is officially approved.

June 1990: The project terminates its activity in Rosh Ha'ayin and Petah Tikva.

September 1990: The overall responsibility for the continued operation of the Family Day Care Centre Programme in Morasha is transferred to the Social Services Department.

October 1990: The Early Childhood and Family Education Project closes down after eight years of activity, at the end of the period for which the Van Leer Foundation gave its support.

At the same time, the procedural steps required to dismantle the Early Childhood Association were also taken.

Appendix 3

# Community profiles

**Morasha and Ramat Hasharon**[1]
There are 35,000 inhabitants in Ramat HaSharon; in Morasha there are approximately 2,000 families, or about 9,000 people.

The average age of the head of the household is 42 to 51 years. About 40 per cent of the population is 0 to 19 years old. About eight per cent is 65 and over.

The average family size in Morasha is 4.66. About 23 per cent of the families have 6 or more members; 14 per cent have more than 8 members.

61 per cent of Morasha's population were born in Asia or Africa, 28 per cent in Europe, and 11 per cent in Israel.

25 per cent of the inhabitants of Morasha have less than eight years of schooling; 35 per cent have eight years; 28 per cent, eight to 12 years, and 12 per cent have over 13 years of education. In other neighbourhoods of Ramat HaSharon 50 per cent of the population have acquired more than 13 years of education.

Most heads of households in Morasha are part of the active working force, although some do not have steady employment. About 11 to 17 per cent are non-professionals. Only 20 per cent of the women in Morasha work, compared to 50 per cent of the women in the rest of Ramat HaSharon. Most of them are employed in the private services sector.

**Amishav - Petah Tikva**[2]
The Amishav neighbourhood is located in the eastern part of Petah Tikva, constructed on the site of a transit camp which absorbed waves of immigration during the 1950s, mostly from Islamic countries. During the 1970s and 1980s, additional houses were constructed, inhabited partly by immigrants from Eastern Europe and partly by young couples from outside the neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood comprises about 950 households with some 5,000 residents. Its community services include a Family Health Centre, a *Kupat Holim* Health Fund clinic, a Social Services Department office, two elementary schools, seven kindergartens, two day care centres and a community centre. The total number of children aged 0 to 6 (according to 1986 Project Renewal reports) is as follows: In 1984 to 1986, 192 children aged 0 to 3; in 1981 to 1983, 285 children aged 3 to 6.

**Yoseftal - Petah Tikva**
The Yoseftal neighbourhood is in the eastern part of Petah Tikva, constructed at the site of a transit camp populated by immigrants from Yemen in the early 1950s. During the 1950s, a second stage was constructed for immigrants from North Africa, while in the 1970s, a third stage was built for immigrants from Eastern Europe and native born Israeli young couples.

The neighbourhood comprises about 1,600 households with some 7,000 residents. Its community services include a Family Health Centre, a *Kupat Holim* Health Fund clinic, a Social Services Department office, two elementary schools, nine kindergartens, one special kindergarten and a day-care centre. The total number of children aged 0 to 6 according to 1986 Project Renewal reports is as follows: In 1983 to 1986, 215 children aged 0 to 3; in 1980 to 1983, 389 children aged 3 to 6.

**Rosh Ha'ayin**

Rosh Ha'ayin was founded in the early 1950s as an immigrant town on the foundations of an abandoned British army camp and its adjacent tent accommodations; and was populated exclusively by immigrants from Yemen. Subsequently, the town did not absorb more immigrants; its population growth was primarily the result of a high rate of natural increase. Rosh Ha'ayin had a population of 11,700 in 1970 and about 12,000 in 1986 (97 per cent Yemenites and 3 per cent Indians).

The town's community services include two Family Health Centres, a *Kupat Holim* Health Fund clinic, a community centre, seven elementary schools, a comprehensive school including both a junior and senior high school, a Ministry of Labour operated school, 26 kindergartens and two day care centres.

NOTES ON APPENDIX THREE

1. These data were taken from a survey conducted by Project Renewal, and they reflect the situation in 1980.

2. The background data and characteristics were derived from community profiles drawn up by Project Renewal in the early eighties.

# Publications from the Bernard van Leer Foundation

The following publications are available free of charge to interested individuals and organisations. A full list of all the Foundation's publications is also available. Please write to Communications Section, Bernard van Leer Foundation, PO Box 82334, 2508 EH The Hague, The Netherlands.

**Newsletter**
The Foundation Newsletter reports on the work of Foundation-supported projects throughout the world and provides information on issues related to early childhood care and education. Published four times a year (January, April, July and October) in English. Copies of back issues are available on request. ISSN 0921-5840. An annual Spanish language compilation of Newsletter items – *Boletín Informativo* – is also available. ISSN 0921-593X

**Current Programme**
Incorporating the Foundation's Annual Report, each edition of Current Programme contains brief descriptions of all major projects being supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in over 40 developing and industrialised countries. Published annually in English – ISSN 0921-5948, and in Spanish as – *Programa Actual* – ISSN 0924-302X

**The Bernard van Leer Foundation**
An introductory leaflet about the aims and work of the Foundation. Published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and German.

**Introducing Evaluation,** Willem van der Eyken
This practical introduction to evaluation in early childhood projects is based on the experiences of projects supported by the Foundation in many parts of the world. Aimed at staff of field projects, it offers some general principles and includes an annotated bibliography. Published 1992. ISBN 90-6195-000-0

**Paths to Empowerment,** Ruth Paz
This book traces the development of community education projects which have been supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in Israel over a 10 year period. The importance of the community promoter, or para-professional the woman from the community who learns and leads the others into learning is highlighted. The book traces the gradual maturation of practices in a variety of projects in different settings, not as a rigid model to be followed but as a compendium of real life experiences and thinking which can be built upon by communities involved in early childhood care and education wherever they are in the world. Published 1990 in English. ISBN 90-6195-018-X

**Shaping Tomorrow.** Ruth Cohen
For more than 20 years, Service Volunteered for All (Servol) has been listening to the people in communities in Trinidad and Tobago and working with them to transform their society. Servol's approach is one which gives people hope for the future. By working with and through local communities, it brings people together for common purposes – such as the establishment of community-run pre-schools, or adolescent skills training courses which focus on encouraging young people to adopt positive attitudes to life – so that eventually whole communities gain the confidence in their abilities to achieve. Published 1991 in English. ISBN 90-6195-021-X

**The Power to Change.** Andrew Chetley
The basic ingredients of this book are a small-scale early childhood project in one village which grew to encompass whole communities in the Costa Atlántica region of Colombia; a university with a commitment to the people of the region; and a willingness to listen to and learn from the people of the *barrios*. If there is a lesson to be learned from this experience, it is that development is something that has to be undertaken *by* people, not done *to* them. It is a lesson that is relevant to all of us everywhere. Published 1990 in English. ISBN 90-6195-019-8. (Also available in Spanish)

**A Small Awakening: the work of the Bernard van Leer Foundation 1965-1986.** Hugh Philp with Andrew Chetley
Based on research undertaken by Professor Hugh Philp, the Foundation Consultant for Australasia, this publication traces the development of the Foundation through its projects and other activities over a 20 year period. From an initial focus on compensatory education, the Foundation's work has evolved, in the light of experience, to its present emphasis on the development of children in the context of their own environments. Published 1988 in English. ISBN 90-6195-015-5

**Studies and Evaluation papers**

A series of Studies and Evaluation papers was launched by the Foundation in mid-1991. It comprises short background documents drawn from field experience and aims to present relevant findings and reflections on 'work in progress'. A list of Studies and Evaluation Papers currently in print can be obtained from the Communications Section at the address given.

**Occasional Papers**

**Early Childhood Care and Education: the Challenge.** Walter Barker (Occasional Paper N° 1)

The first in a series of Occasional Papers addressing issues of major importance to policy makers, practitioners and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children. Published 1987 in English.

**Meeting the Needs of Young Children: Policy Alternatives,** Glen Nimmicht and Marta Arango with Lydia Hearn (Occasional Paper N° 2)

The paper reviews conventional, institution-based approaches to the care and education of young children in disadvantaged societies and proposes the development of alternative, low-cost strategies which take account of family and community resources and involvement as the starting point for such programmes. Published 1987 in English.

**Evaluation in Action: a case study of an under-fives centre in Scotland,**

Joyce Watt (Occasional Paper N° 3) ·
The main body of this paper is the evaluation report of a Foundation-supported project in the United Kingdom. It is preceded by an examination of the issues involved in evaluation together with an explanation of the way in which this particular study was carried out.
It has been published with the external evaluator in mind, but will be of interest to all those involved in the evaluation of community-oriented projects. Published 1988 in English. ISBN 90-6195-014-7

**Videos from the Foundation**

The Foundation also distributes a number of videos about work in early childhood development. These are available in both VHS and Betamax formats in the PAL or NTSC systems. A small charge to cover costs of copying and postage is made to organisations outside the Foundation network. A list is available from the Foundation at the address given above.

**How the projects work**

All projects supported by the Foundation have, at their core, the development of young children. Some projects are centre-based which means that they are working in and through pre-schools, nurseries or primary schools. Other projects are home-based and work with families in their ownhomes and other care givers in the community in order to create understanding and awareness of children's developmental needs. Many projects combine both these approaches and much of the work is carried out by women from the same community who have been trained by the project.
Work with parents and with community members can lead to other improvements in the social and physical environment and in the self-assurance of the community as a whole.Projects supported by the Foundation base their work on a number of common principles.

- A holistic approach to children's development
- Emphasising the special role that parents have as the child's first educators
- Improving the children's environments
- Embedding projects firmly in local communities

**Foundation support**

Foundation support consists of more than just money for projects and includes a range of technical and other support both from the office in The Netherlands and from the field itself:

- development and support of projects in the field, including training and evaluation;
- dissemination of project outcomes;
- publications and other media;
- access to a documentation centre;
- organisation of seminars, conferences and workshops;
- support for networking.

Much of the support which comes from the Foundation is based on what is learned from the field. And much of what is learned in the field comes from similar projects, some also supported by the Foundation, some not.
The Foundation also cooperates with other organisations involved in early childhood development and related fields at national and international levels.

**Applications for support**

- The vast majority of projects supported by the Foundation have arisen following a process of discussion and negotiation between the Foundation and the partner organisation. Any organisation seeking support is thus advised to submit an outline of the aims and objectives of a project before preparing a detailed proposal.
- The Foundation gives preference to the support of projects in countries in which Royal Packaging van Leer is operating.
- The only projects that can be considered for support are those in the area of early childhood development, that involve communities living in disadvantaged circumstances, and that include elements of innovatory practice.
- Grants are not given to individuals or for general support to organisations.
- The Foundation does not provide study, research or travel grants.
- Decisions concerning the funding of major projects are taken by the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. No commitments can be given before such approval by the Board.



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